

# Military Service, Military Lands, and the Status of Soldiers: Current Problems and Interpretations

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the military, as the coercive arm of an organized state, and “civil society” is always interesting and important, because it is never an easy one. There are always tensions between the army in its purely military role (however that may be defined in each specific culture), and the army as a nexus of social opinions and people of different regional or local loyalties and traditions.

How we approach the subject depends on what structural significance we attach to the army in the state and society: which elements of the army played what roles in politics, for example, and where in the pattern of social power relationships are they to be situated at different times? What sort of state are we talking about? And how did the state organize such things as the recruitment and payment, the equipping and supplying of its soldiers? And how do we define the term “soldier” in a society in which there were quite clearly both technical and everyday usages, reflected in the employment of the word *stratiotes* to mean different things in different contexts?

Tied in to these questions are issues of normative roles and behavior. How did people in the society regard soldiers of differing status and function? How did they respond to them under different conditions—especially those which counted as “abnormal”? What legal status did soldiers of all types have in respect of their position in regard to the state and civil society at large?

Finally, how did the political ideology of the state fit soldiers into its scheme of things? And how did soldiers use this ideological system at different times, to whose advantage did they act, and with what intention? What was the self-perception of soldiers, and how differentiated was it—was there a difference, for example, between the

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<sup>1</sup>In spite of the considerable literature treating the military structures of the later empire, studies dealing specifically with the issues mentioned here have only relatively recently begun to appear. The classic work is R. MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963). W. E. Kaegi, Jr., *Byzantine Military Unrest 471–843: An Interpretation* (Amsterdam, 1981), provides a survey of the role of

views of officers and those of “men,” between fighters and logistics staff, or across time, as the social origins of soldiers changed?<sup>1</sup>

I cannot examine all these themes here. But by looking at a particular area, namely that of the social status and recruitment of soldiers and their leaders in the context of the strategic organization of the armies and its evolution, I shall touch upon several of them and suggest some approaches which may be useful for further research. For in spite of differences in emphasis over the years, certain key problems continue to dominate the study of the Byzantine army, especially where its institutional and social history is concerned. This is particularly evident in two major themes, namely, the origins, development, and decline of the middle Byzantine system of military districts, or *themata*, and of the system of “military lands.” And it is worth noting that this represents no mere concern for administrative and institutional history alone. On the contrary, it was evident from the very beginnings of the debate that these institutions played a crucial role in the social and political history of the Byzantine world.

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armies in state and provincial politics, but no analysis of the social and economic contexts within which this should be understood. He does provide some references to the modern sociology of the military, however, illustrative of the sort of work which might be done on similar Byzantine institutions (and see my review, in *BSI* 44 [1983], 54–57); A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols. and maps (Oxford, 1964), 607–80, provides the best modern survey of many of these aspects for the period up to the year 602. It can be supplemented by a range of more recent publications, esp. the collection *Armées et fiscalité dans le monde antique* (= Colloques nationaux du CNRS, no. 936) (Paris, 1977), particularly the contributions of R. Rebuffat, J.-M. Carrié, M. Christol, D. Van Berchem, A. Chastagnol, and E. Patlagean; the chapter of F. Winkelmann, “Zum byzantinischen Staat (Kaiser, Aristokratie, Heer),” in F. Winkelmann, H. Köpstein, H. Ditten, and I. Rochow, *Byzanz im 7. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen zur Herausbildung des Feudalismus* (= BBA 48) (Berlin, 1978), 161–288; T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy, A.D. 554–800* (Rome, 1984); J.-M. Carrié, “L’esercito: Trasformazioni funzionali ed economie locali,” in *Società romana e impero tardoantico: Istituzioni, Ceti, Economie*, ed. A. Giardina (Rome, 1986), 449–88, 760–71; idem, “Patronage et propriété militaire au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle: Objet rhétorique et objet réel du Discours ‘Sur les Patronages’ de Libanius,” *BCH* 100 (1976), 159–76; G. Ravegnani, *Soldati di Bisanzio in età Giustiniana* (= Materiali e Ricerche, nuova Serie 6) (Rome, 1988); the relevant sections of S. Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali del quarto secolo* (Rome, 1951); R. Rémondon, “Militaires et civils dans une campagne égyptienne au temps de Constance II,” *JSav* (1965), 132–43; as well as in a number of older works. Of these, the most significant are: F. Ausaresses, *L’Armée byzantine à la fin du 6<sup>e</sup> siècle d’après le Stratégicon de l’empereur Maurice* (= Bibliothèque des Universités du Midi, fasc. 14) (Paris, 1909); R. Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der byzantinischen Themenverfassung* (Berlin, 1920); J. Maspéro, *Organisation militaire de l’Égypte byzantine* (Paris, 1912); A. Müller, “Das Heer Iustinians nach Prokop und Agathias,” *Philologus* 71 (1912), 101–38; E. Stein, “Untersuchungen zur spät-byzantinischen Verfassungs- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte,” *Mitteilungen zur osmanischen Geschichte* 2 (1923–25), 1–62; J. L. Teall, “The Barbarians in Justinian’s Armies,” *Speculum* 40 (1965), 294–322; D. Van Berchem, *L’Armée de Dioclétien et la réforme Constantinienne* (Paris, 1952). For a recent attempt to analyze, from a Weberian perspective, the complexities of normative political beliefs in Constantinople during the reign of Justinian, including also the position of the soldiers and officers of the palatine and other units in the capital, esp. with respect to the Nika “riot,” see Chr. Gizewski, *Zur Normativität und Struktur der Verfassungsverhältnisse in der späteren römischen Kaiserzeit* (= MünchBeitr 71) (Munich, 1988).

In addition to these a number of works deal primarily with institutional/administrative aspects of Roman and later Roman military organization, some of which also include discussions of the social and ideological position of soldiers. See, for example, Th. Mommsen, “Das römische Militärwesen seit Diocletian,” *Hermes* 24 (1889), 195–279; and more recently E. Gabba, *Per la storia dell’esercito romano in età imperiale* (Bologna, 1974); idem, in “Ordinamenti militari del Tardo Impero,” in *Ordinamenti militari in Occidente nell’alto medioevo* (= *Settimane* 15, 1967) (Spoleto, 1968), 1, 79ff; D. Hoffmann, *Das spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum* (= Epigraphische Studien 7) (Düsseldorf–Köln, 1969).

## II. A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY

Until the 1940s, scholars had more or less agreed on the nature of the transition from late Roman military structures to those of the Byzantine Empire. There were differences of opinion, of course, but on the whole these were relatively minor. Writers such as Fedor Uspenskij and Julian Kulakovskij in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—along with scholars such as Heinrich Gelzer, John Bagnell Bury, Norman Baynes, Charles Diehl, Charles William Oman, Ernst Stein, and one or two others—had devoted articles and monographs to aspects of the military organization of the empire.<sup>2</sup> All had noted and commented upon the difference between the late Roman system of civil provinces and military regions under separate and distinct administrative structures, and the later Byzantine system of military districts or *themata* under the unified authority of a *strategos* or general. Uspenskij first remarked on the possible relationship between themes and soldiers' lands, and the events of the reign of Heraclius; Gelzer in particular, followed by Stein, who also noted the possibility of a connection between the beginnings of the themes and the lands of soldiers, attempted to trace the process of change from one to another, and other historians—especially Bury—took up this problem.<sup>3</sup> The general consensus was that the origins of the later themes lay in a combination of the militarization of the older Roman provinces and dioceses, on the one hand, stressing in particular the formation of the two exarchates of Ravenna and Carthage in the reign of Tiberius II or Maurice (i.e., between 578 and 602), with the establishment of a more widespread provincialization of recruitment following the pattern of the *limitanei*, the frontier garrison soldiers spread along the *limites* or defended borders of the empire. The majority of scholars regarded the reign of Heraclius as central to these changes.<sup>4</sup>

The discussion then lapsed for some years, and it was only in the late 1940s that the problem of the creation of the *themata* again began to attract interest. This is not to say that further work did not appear in the interim: the Hungarian scholar Eugen Darkó published several articles on what was seen as the process of "militarization" of the

<sup>2</sup>F. I. Uspenskij, "Voennoe ustrojstvo vizantijskoj imperii," *IRAİK* 6 (1900), 154–207; J. Kulakovskij, *Istorija Vizantii*, III: 602–717 (Kiev, 1915; London, 1973), 387ff; idem, "K voprosu ob imeni i istorii Themy 'Opsikii,'" *VizVrem* 11 (1904), 49–62, and the reviews by K. Krumbacher, "Zur Frage über die Themen des byzantinischen Reiches," *BZ* 13 (1904), 641f, and L. Bréhier, "La transformation de l'empire byzantin sous les Héraclides," *JSav* (1917), 401–15, 445–53, 498–506; H. Gelzer, *Die Genesis der byzantinischen Themenverfassung* (= *Abhandlungen der philologisch-historischen klasse der königl. sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, vol. 18, no. 5) (Leipzig, 1899; repr. Amsterdam, 1966); E. W. Brooks, "Arabic Lists of Byzantine Themes," *JHS* 21 (1901), 167–77; J. B. Bury, "The *aplekta* of Asia Minor," *Byzantis* 2 (1911–12), 216–24; J. B. Bury, "The Naval Policy of the Roman Empire in Relation to the Western Provinces from the Seventh to the Ninth Century," in *Centenario della Nascita di Michele Amari* II (Palermo, 1910), 21–34; J. B. Bury, *The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century, with a revised text of the Kletorologion of Philotheos* (= British Academy Supplemental Papers I) (London, 1911); Ch. Diehl, *Études sur l'administration byzantine dans l'Exarchat de Ravenne* (= BEFAR 53) (Paris, 1888); Ch. Diehl, "L'origine du régime des Thèmes dans l'empire byzantin," in his *Études Byzantines* (Paris, 1905), 276–92; C. W. Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* (London, 1924); E. Stein, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Reiches vornehmlich unter den Kaisern Justinus II und Tiberius Konstantinus* (Stuttgart, 1919), esp. 117–40 ("Zur Entstehung der Themenverfassung").

<sup>3</sup>See Gelzer, *Themenverfassung*; Stein, *Studien*; Bury, *The Imperial Administrative System*.

<sup>4</sup>See in particular Diehl, "L'Origine du régime des thèmes."

Byzantine Empire and the influence of military structures from the Eurasian steppe zone, while the Greek scholar Nikostratos Kalomenopoulos published a book in 1937 on the organization of the Byzantine army. The latter, unfortunately, has no bibliography and virtually no secondary references, so that it is difficult to say what aspects of the debate the author was familiar with; but Kalomenopoulos did take up a further element of the problem, one which had been raised first by Uspenskij, then by Gelzer and by Diehl, namely that of the nature of recruitment of the soldiers and the connection between that and the themes themselves.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in discussing aspects of the imperial fiscal and civil administration, a number of scholars had to deal with some of the questions raised in connection with military organization.<sup>6</sup>

The beginnings of the modern debate, if we can call it that, can be traced to the work of Agostino Pertusi and Georg Ostrogorsky. In an article in 1953, Ostrogorsky set out to disprove the thesis that had been recently proposed by Pertusi that the *themata* were a development of the second half of the seventh century only, and to prove on the contrary that there had existed a direct connection between the creation of the themes, the politics of Emperor Heraclius during and immediately after the Persian war, and the ways in which soldiers in the themes were recruited. It was Ostrogorsky who first constructed a clear set of hypotheses about the nature of the military lands, whose creation he attributed to Heraclius, and the establishment of new, militarized provinces, created to cater for the recruiting and supplying of the field armies of the period of the Persian and, more especially, the first Arab wars, field armies which Diehl had already seen bore the Hellenized names of their late Roman predecessors, the forces of the *magistri militum*.<sup>7</sup>

Ostrogorsky's thesis on the "theme system," which it now became, was supported, tacitly or more vocally, by several scholars, among them both Franz Dölger and Wilhelm Enßlin.<sup>8</sup> But it was soon challenged by Pertusi, elaborating on his original position, as well as by Johannes Karayannopoulos.<sup>9</sup> The latter argued for a more gradual evolution

<sup>5</sup>E. Darkó, "La militarizzazione dell'impero bizantino," *SBN* 5 (1939), 88–99; idem, "Influences touraniennes sur l'évolution de l'art militaire des Grecs, des Romains et des Byzantins," *Byzantion* 10 (1935), 443–69; N. Kalomenopoulos, *He stratiotike organosis tes hellenikes autokratourias tou Byzantiou* (Athens, 1937), see 20ff.

<sup>6</sup>See in particular F. Dölger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts* (= *ByzArch* 9) (Munich, 1927; Hildesheim, 1960); G. Ostrogorsky, "Die ländliche Steuergemeinde des byzantinischen Reiches im X. Jahrhundert," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 20 (1927), 1–108; G. Ostrogorsky, "Das Steuersystem im byzantinischen Altertum und Mittelalter," *Byzantion* 6 (1931), 229–40.

<sup>7</sup>See Diehl, "L'Origine du régime des thèmes," 290f; and A. Pertusi, "Nuova ipotesi sull'origine dei 'temi bizantini'," *Aevum* 28 (1954), 126–50; idem, ed. and comm., *Costantino Porfirogenito, De Thematibus* (= ST 160) (Città del Vaticano, 1952), commentary, 120ff; G. Ostrogorsky, "Sur la date de la composition du Livre des Thèmes et sur l'époque de la constitution des premiers Thèmes d'Asie Mineure," *Byzantion* 23 (1953), 31–66.

<sup>8</sup>F. Dölger, "Zur Ableitung des byzantinischen Verwaltungsterminus *thema*," *Historia* 4 (1955), 189–98, repr. in F. Dölger, *Paraspora: 30 Aufsätze zur Geschichte, Kultur und Sprache des byzantinischen Reiches* (Ettal, 1961), 231–46; W. Enßlin, "Der Kaiser Herakleios und die Themenverfassung," *BZ* 46 (1953), 362–68; also idem, "Zur Verwaltung Siziliens vom Ende des weströmischen Reiches bis zum Beginn der Themenverfassung," *SBN* 7 (1953), 355–64. See also the comment of N. H. Baynes, "The Emperor Heraclius and the Military Theme System," *EHR* 67 (1952), 380–81.

<sup>9</sup>A. Pertusi, "La formation des thèmes byzantins," in *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, I (Munich, 1958), 1–40; J. Karayannopoulos, "Contribution au problème des Thèmes byzantins," *Hellénisme*



of the themes out of the old late Roman field armies and the *limitanei*, suggesting in effect that the situation as it is known from the sixth century developed through a “natural progression” to that known from the tenth century. Pertusi’s views, which provide the third possibility, and which seem to me the most plausible, argue for a gradual transformation of the late Roman establishment under the pressures imposed by the radically changed military, political, and economic situation which pertained from the earlier and middle seventh century and after.

The result from the late 1950s—summed up nicely in the papers presented by these scholars at the 1958 International Byzantine Congress in Munich and those published in the years immediately after<sup>10</sup>—was the establishment of two clearly divided schools of thought: one based its arguments around the idea of Heraclius having deliberately introduced a series of “reforms” in a conscious effort to counter future threats from the Persians; the other, in one of the two variant forms referred to above, presented what has been called a gradualist approach, seeing the themes as arising slowly out of either the administrative structures of the sixth century or out of the chaos of the seventh century, and questioning the connection of the latter with the system of recruitment, however it worked, postulated by the Ostrogorsky thesis, a system centered on the notion of the “military lands.” The most extreme version of the opposition to the Ostrogorsky approach was voiced by Paul Lemerle in two articles published in 1958, the same year as the Munich Congress, in which he argued that there was no clear connection in the sources between military lands, so called, and the themes.<sup>11</sup> Hélène Ahrweiler similarly published a major survey of the military and civil administrative apparatus of the state from the ninth to the eleventh century in which, while avoiding the issue of the origins of the themes and military lands, she tended implicitly toward Lemerle’s position. Hélène Antoniadis-Bibicou, analyzing the origins of the naval *thema* of the *Karabisiarioi*, although with different conclusions, tended in contrast to follow the position promoted by Ostrogorsky.<sup>12</sup>

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*Contemporain* 10 (1956), 455–502; idem, *Die Entstehung der byzantinischen Themenordnung* (= *ByzArch* 10) (Munich, 1959); idem, “Die vermeintliche Reformtätigkeit des Kaisers Herakleios,” *JÖBG* 10 (1961), 53–57.

<sup>10</sup>See, for example, G. Ostrogorsky, “Korreferat zu Pertusi, La formation des Thèmes byzantins,” in *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, I (Munich, 1958), 1–8; idem, *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, 3rd ed. (= *HAW* 12, 1.2: *Byzantinisches Handbuch* 1, 2) (Munich, 1963), 80ff; idem, “L’Exarchat de Ravenne et l’origine des Thèmes byzantins,” *CorsiRav* 1 (1960), 99–110; see also the critical review of the work of Pertusi and Karayannopoulos by Ostrogorsky, in *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 47 (1960), 261ff; H.-W. Haussig, “Die Anfänge der Themenordnung,” in *Finanzgeschichte der Spätantike*, ed. F. Altheim and R. Stiel (Frankfurt a.M., 1957), 82–114.

<sup>11</sup>P. Lemerle, “Esquisse pour un histoire agraire de Byzance,” *RH* 219 (1958), 32–74, 254–84; *RH* 220 (1958), 42–94; now revised and published as *The Agrarian History of Byzantium from the Origins to the Twelfth Century: The Sources and the Problems* (Galway, 1979); see the review by A. P. Kazhdan, in *VizVrem* 16 (1959), 92ff, which prefers the “traditional” view represented by Ostrogorsky. It is worth noting, however, that even Gelzer thought that the “theme system” developed only very slowly, reaching maturity toward the end of the eighth century, a view based on the continued existence, and use, of the older, late Roman, civil provincial names, and on certain facets of the imperial administration as revealed through the sigillographic material then available and occasional references in the literary sources. As I have suggested elsewhere, he was not mistaken in this appreciation of the situation. See below.

<sup>12</sup>H. Ahrweiler, “Recherches sur l’administration de l’empire byzantin aux IX<sup>e</sup>–XI<sup>e</sup> siècles,” *BCH* 84 (1960), 1–109; views repeated in eadem, *Byzance et la mer: La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions*

Apart from one or two significant contributions dealing with specific problems from scholars such as Nicolas Oikonomides and Walter Kaegi in the period from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s—the former tending to favor the Heraclian reform, the latter clearly coming out against it—the situation remained more or less polarized around these positions for the next fifteen years or so.<sup>13</sup>

As always seems to happen with such debates, what can in fact be taken as a compromise solution then developed, but one which was clearly along the lines of that enunciated in the work of Pertusi and, to a lesser extent, Karayannopoulos. On the one hand, certain developments, crucial to the evolution of the later “thematic” system, did have their roots in the reign of Heraclius, even before his reign (a point stressed by Stein). On the other hand, the idea that there had been any direct institutional connection between the *limitanei* and the thematic system was challenged or dismissed, while it was also argued that there is no evidence for the creation of a system of recruitment based from its beginnings on the attribution by the state of lands to soldiers and their families at all.<sup>14</sup>

In the last few years, a number of historians have expressed their support for this position; others have accepted it, with minor and major modifications; still others have rejected it, and sought to restore the Ostrogorsky thesis to its former preeminence. Of the first two groups, Ahrweiler, André Guillou, Kaegi, Gilbert Dagron, Danŭta Górecki, and Oikonomides are probably the names which have appeared most frequently in print. But there are several others. Of the last group, Warren Treadgold and Martha Gregoriou-Ioannidou have provided the most important counterarguments, although very different from one another, with Michael Hendy providing a middle-road alternative: Gregoriou-Ioannidou has tried to revive a Karayannopoulos view, bringing the

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*maritimes de Byzance aux VII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1966), 19ff; H. Antoniadis-Bibicou, “A propos de la première mention d’un stratège des Caravisiens,” *BSI* 27 (1966), 71–91; eadem, *Études d’histoire maritime à Byzance, à propos du Thème des Caravisiens* (Bibliothèque Générale de l’École Pratique des Hautes Études, VI<sup>e</sup> section) (Paris, 1966), 47–61, 99ff, with a useful survey of views expressed up to that time.

<sup>13</sup>N. Oikonomides, “A Chronological Note on the First Persian Campaign of Heraclius (622),” *BMGS* 1 (1975), 1–9, see the comment at 8–9; idem, “Les premiers mentions des thèmes dans la chronique de Théophane,” *ZRVI* 16 (1976), 1–8; idem, “Une liste arabe des stratèges byzantins du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle et les origines du Thème de Sicile,” *RSBN* 11 (1964), 121–30; also in favor of a Heraclian origin is J. L. Teall, “The Byzantine Agricultural Tradition,” *DOP* 25 (1971), 34–59, see 47f; P. Charanis, “Some Remarks on the Changes in Byzantium in the Seventh Century,” in *Mélanges G. Ostrogorsky* I (= *ZRVI* 8. 1) (Belgrade, 1963), 71–76. Skeptical with regard to a Heraclian creation, W. E. Kaegi, Jr., “Some Reconsiderations on the Themes: Seventh-Ninth Centuries,” *JÖBG* 16 (1967), 39–53; idem, “Some Perspectives on the Middle Byzantine Period,” *Balkan Studies* 10 (1969), 293–98; idem, *Byzantine Military Unrest* (cited note 1 above), esp. 174–79.

<sup>14</sup>See R.-J. Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber* (= *MiscByzMonac* 22) (Munich, 1976), esp. 287–321; idem, “‘Thrakien’ und ‘Thrakesion’: Zur byzantinischen Provinzorganisation am Ende des 7. Jahrhunderts,” *JÖB* 26 (1977), 7–47; and most recently, idem, “Die zweihundertjährige Reform: Zu den Anfängen der Themenorganisation im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert,” *BSI* 45 (1984), 27–39, 190–201; E. Patlagean, “L’impôt payé par les soldats,” in *Armées et fiscalité* (cited note 1 above), 303–9; J. F. Haldon, “Recruitment and Conscription in the Byzantine Army c.550–950: A Study on the Origins of the stratotika ktemata,” *SBWien* 357 (Vienna, 1979); idem, “Some Remarks on the Background to the Iconoclast Controversy,” *BSI* 38 (1977), 161–84; idem, with H. Kennedy, “The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organisation and Society in the Borderlands,” *ZRVI* 19 (1980), 79–116; idem, *Byzantine Praetorians: An Administrative, Institutional, and Social Survey of the Opsikion and Tagmata, c.580–900* (= *Poikila Byzantina* 3) (Bonn, 1984), esp. 164–74.

*limitanei* back into the picture, whereas Treadgold has tried to build a thesis more purely representing the position of Ostrogorsky, basing his arguments primarily on the traditional significance ascribed to the reign of Heraclius, together with some new suggestions, in particular regarding the fate of the imperial estates between the seventh and tenth century. Hendy has favored a version of this last view, with some important suggestions on the role of the fiscal administration and the *kommerkiarioi*; and Oikonomides has also suggested his own middle way, supporting tentatively the idea of an original Heraclian origin, but in the context of a gradual evolution tied in to the changing fiscal structures of the state as well as its military administration.<sup>15</sup>

In what follows, I should like to make this brief summary of often quite complex debates more meaningful by outlining key issues of the current state of the debate. I will try to give a balanced overview.

### III. THE DEBATE ON THE SO-CALLED THEME SYSTEM

There are two aspects to the problems we have discussed: the origins of the so-called theme system itself; and the ways in which soldiers were recruited, and the connection that has been postulated by some historians between these and the *themata* themselves. With the exception of one or two specific problems, the former is probably the most easily summarized and involves the least number of technical textual problems, and so I will deal with this first. I will then examine the systems of recruitment, which remain still the focus of considerable disagreement, and last I will examine the implications of all this for the social position and status of soldiers and “the military” in general in the Byzantine world at different times.

It is generally agreed that the word *thema* meant originally simply army, applied to the forces of the commanders-in-chief (or *magistri militum*) of the late Roman field armies (those of Oriens, Armenia, the praesental field forces or Obsequium, and Thrace, together with the rump of the Justinianic Quaestura exercitus, which formed a naval

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, A. Guillou, *Régionalisme et indépendance dans l'empire byzantin au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle: L'exemple de l'Exarchat et de la Pentapole d'Italie* (Rome, 1969); idem, “Transformation des structures socio-économiques dans le monde byzantin du VI<sup>e</sup> au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *ZRVI* 19 (1980), 71–78; W. E. Kaegi, Jr., “Changes in Military Organization and Daily Life on the Eastern Frontier,” in *He Kathemerine Zoe sto Byzantio. Tomes kai Synexeies sten hellenistike kai romaike paradosi. Praktika* (Athens, 1989), 507–21; idem, “Notes on Hagiographic Sources for Some Institutional Changes and Continuities in the Early Seventh Century,” *Byzantina* 7 (1975), 58–70; idem, “Two Studies in the Continuity of Late Roman and Byzantine Military Institutions,” *ByzF* 8 (1982), 87–113; idem, “Heraklios and the Arabs,” *GOTR* 27 (1982), 109–33; idem, “Late Roman Continuity in the Financing of Heraclius’ Army,” in *Akten des XVI. Internationalen Byzantinistenkongresses*, 2. 2 (JÖB 32.2) (Vienna, 1982), 53–61; G. Dagron, “Byzance et le modèle islamique au X<sup>e</sup> siècle: À propos des constitutions tactiques de l'empereur Léon VI,” *CRAI* (1983), 219–42; D. Górecki, “The Strateia of Constantine VII: The Legal Status, Administration and Historical Background,” *BZ* 82 (1989), 157–76. For the critics of this position, see W. T. Treadgold, “The Military Lands and the Imperial Estates in the Middle Byzantine Empire,” in *Okeanos: Essays presented to Ihor Ševčenko on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students* (= *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 7) (Cambridge, Mass., 1983) 619–31; and M. Gregoriou-Ioannidou, “Plerophoreies hagiologikon keimenon gyro apo stratiotika zetemata,” in *He Kathemerine Zoe sto Byzantio* (cited above), 531–45; and esp. eadem, *Stratologia kai eggeia stratiotike idioktesia sto Byzantio* (= *Hetaireia Byzantinon Spoudon* 4) (Thessaloniki, 1989). For the arguments of Hendy and Oikonomides, see M. F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c.300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 619ff, and N. Oikonomides, “Middle Byzantine Provincial Recruits: Salary and Armament,” in *Gonimos: Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*, ed. J. Duffy and J. Peradotto (Buffalo, N.Y., 1988), 121–36.

division referred to until the later seventh century as the *Karabisianoï*, or ship troops).<sup>16</sup> Its origins are disputed, but the most likely root is from the verb *tithemi*, to set down or, by derivation and extension, establish, an argument put forward by Dölger in 1955, and referring to the fact that the armies in question were withdrawn into Asia Minor shortly after 636–637, in which year Roman attempts to reestablish their position in Syria and Palestine were finally shattered at the battle of the Yarmuk.<sup>17</sup> The Greek versions of these Latin divisional names became standard and are those which can be recognized as the Anatolikon, Armeniakon, Opsikion, Thrakesion, and Karabisianoï, as mentioned. The actual process of withdrawal, which appears to have followed the defeat at the Yarmuk in 636, probably took place from about 637 to 640. There is evidence that the process was rather carefully organized in regard to the logistical demands of the divisions, which were thus withdrawn in relation to the potential and extent of the districts which they came to occupy to support them adequately. This last point will be relevant when we consider the ways in which the state came to maintain its forces in the second half of the seventh century and afterward.

But it seems that already by the 670s and perhaps earlier an identity had developed between the names of the armies so withdrawn by Heraclius and the districts occupied by the said armies, so that the group of provinces occupied by a given army came to be referred to by the name of that army. Thus the names of the armies were applied to the districts over which they were spread, and a new set of territorial descriptive terms enters the medieval Greek language. But it is very important to say that, as far as I can tell, this hardly affected the administration of those regions. The older civil *eparchiai* or provinces continue to exist well into the eighth century and, as I have argued at greater length elsewhere, some significant aspects of the late Roman civil administrative appa-

<sup>16</sup>See Diehl, "L'Origine du régime des thèmes." The *Karabisianoï* appear to be first mentioned in the *iussio* or letter sent to the pope by Justinian II in 687 ratifying the acts of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (held at Constantinople in 680), and are referred to as the *Cabarisiani*. Gelzer (*Georgii Cyprii Descriptio orbis Romani* [Leipzig, 1890], xliii) emended this to *Calarisiani*, hence referring to the forces based at Sardinia and, following the order of the text itself, those based in Africa, but changed his views (following Diehl's arguments) in *Die Genesis der byzantinischen Themenverfassung*, 11, 20ff. Antoniadis-Bibicou took up this suggestion, however, since a later Arab geographer, using earlier sources, also includes a reference to the *patricius* of Sardinia as one of the chief officers of the empire—see N. Oikonomides, "Une liste arabe des stratèges byzantins du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle et les origines du Thème de Sicile," *RSBN* 11 (1964), 121–30, and Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Histoire maritime*, 65f. While this view has been supported by A. Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his World* (London, 1973), 227–28 and note 6, as well as by Guillou, *Régionalisme et indépendance*, 159, note 67, it has been challenged by Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, 22ff; see also P. Charanis, "On the Origins of the Theme of the Carabisiani," in *Silloge Bizantina in Onore di S. G. Mercati* (Rome, 1957), 72–75; Pertusi, "La formation des thèmes byzantins," 39 and note 178. Diehl suggested that the *Carabisiani* represented a successor to the older *Quaestura exercitus* established by Justinian I, a suggestion dismissed, however, by Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer*, 12, note 2. In fact, as Hendy has shown—to my mind, conclusively—Diehl's hypothesis was correct. See Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy*, 651ff.

<sup>17</sup>See Dölger, "Zur Ableitung"; and more recently, J.-D. Howard-Johnston, "Thema," in *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine, and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, ed. A. Moffatt (= *Byzantina Australiensia* 5) (Canberra, 1984), 189–97. The latter argues that the term may be derived from an altaic word, referring to divisions of 10,000 men, and that it was introduced to the Roman army during the reign of Heraclius, probably by Chazar allies. While ingenious, the argument has not met with general acceptance, the more so since the Greek word, while there is no direct evidence of its evolution or its earlier application in the sense suggested by Dölger, nevertheless provides a plausible explanation.

ratus survived until the early ninth century, when it was replaced, whether in stages or a single act, by the emperors of the period up to and including the 840s.<sup>18</sup>

The point is that the traditional view of the *themata* as military districts headed by a generalissimo with supreme authority, both civil and military, is strictly true only for the second half of the ninth and some of the tenth century. Until the abolition or phasing out of the older civil structures between roughly the 780s and 830s, the *strategos* was the head of the *thema*, but in a qualified way, for he was concerned chiefly with the most effective way of supporting and reproducing the provincial armies.

Even after the changes which had occurred by the 840s, evidenced partly in the so-called *Taktikon Uspenskij*, thematic generals remained to a degree independent only as far as purely military matters went. And this is, I think, the nub of the matter: their exalted position in the sources which reflect the situation of the seventh and eighth

<sup>18</sup>For the extent and composition of the first themes, see now Hendy, *Studies*, esp. 621ff; and J. F. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), 215ff. Older literature, and survey of the material, in R.-J. Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform: Zu den Anfängen der Themenorganisation im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert," *BSI* 45 (1984), 27–39, 190–201, see 32ff.

For the survival of the older civil administrative infrastructure, a point first emphasized by Gelzer, *Themenverfassung*, but stressed also by Pertusi, Karayannopoulos, Kaegi, and Lilie, see Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 173–207, esp. 194ff. The process of transformation leading to the "new," medieval system of provincial civil and fiscal administration is difficult to reconstruct. It was certainly slow and represented a series of quite complex, piecemeal responses to specific situations faced by the central government. It has been generally accepted that still in the early ninth century the thematic administration was conducted by civil governors, presumably subordinate to the *strategoi* (although there is no evidence until much later that this was actually the case), officials who combined the role of both the older ad hoc praetorian prefects appointed to cater for the demands of the army (see W. E. Kaegi, Jr., "Two Studies in the Continuity of Late Roman and Byzantine Military Institutions," *ByzF* 8 [1982], 87–113, see 106f), and civil governors of proconsular (*anthypatos*) status. At some point in the first half of the 9th century, however, they appear to have been replaced in their administrative functions by officials who, according to later sources, were under central supervision (from the imperial *sakellion*) called *protonotarioi*, officials of relatively humble status; and at some time after the compilation of the list of precedence known as the *Taktikon Uspenskij*, in 842/3, the posts themselves appear to have been abolished, the title *anthypatos* (proconsul) continuing in use as a purely titular (if also high-ranking) term (see E. Stein, "Ein Kapitel vom persischen und vom byzantinischen Staate," *BNJ* 1 [1920], 50–89, who first discussed this issue in detail, followed by Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte*, 205f; Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 201–6, with 201–2 note 10 on Stein's and Kaegi's interpretations). I have argued that the fact that, from about the same time, thematic *strategoi* begin to be ranked as *anthypatoi* (although the regular use of the term as a de facto recognition of the powers of *strategoi* may pre-date its "official" recognition in the formal system of precedence), is good evidence that the latter were from this time also endowed formally with civil administrative authority, leaving the fiscal supervision of their *themata* to the now much more important *protonotarioi*. For the seals of *protonotarioi* and the literary sources which illustrate their increased prominence in the first half of the 9th century, see esp. F. Winkelmann, *Byzantinische Rang- und Ämterstruktur im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (= BBA 53) (Berlin, 1985), 118–37, esp. 129 (with note 2), 130–31, 142f, with literature cited. For administrative reforms in the first half of the 9th century, see W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford, 1988), esp. 342ff, and in general his *The Byzantine State Finances in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (= East European Monographs 121, Byz. series, 2) (New York, 1982), whose statistical arguments are dubious in the extreme (see the critical remarks of R.-J. Lilie, "Die byzantinischen Staatsfinanzen im 8./9. Jahrhundert und die *stratitotika ktemata*," *BSI* 48 [1987], 49–55; J. F. Haldon, "Byzantium Transformed," *The International History Review* 11.2 [May, 1989], 313–19), but whose general point—that a series of administrative "reforms" took place in the first half of the 9th century (although I would question the extent to which there was a programmatic element to these, and see them rather as a process of "rationalization" of an entrenched, but at origin ad hoc, system which had evolved over the preceding 150 years) is surely correct.

centuries mirrors both the increased importance of armies in the period after the beginning of the Muslim conquests as well as the bias and interests of the sources themselves, which could hardly avoid the political-military matter of everyday life. But the evidence, when examined carefully, actually says very little about the real power and authority of such officers, at least until the ninth and tenth centuries; and then it is clear that their authority was supreme primarily in military affairs, or matters related to the maintenance of the armies—the preparations for war, production of weapons, organizing of supplies and livestock for the troops, and so on. Whether the *strategoi* were ever actually involved in anything more than a very general overseeing capacity in civil affairs remains unclear for lack of evidence. But I suspect they had little to do with this side of the running of their group of provinces, or *thema*.<sup>19</sup>

This is borne out to an extent by the recent work of Kaegi, who has suggested very plausibly that in the last months of the Roman effort to retain control over districts in northern Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine the emperor Heraclius was forced to replace a number of governing officials with officers of a more clearly military competence, both to preserve central authority and prevent local separatism or separate treaty negotiations with Muslim leaders, and the better to organize defensive operations to preserve what was left of Roman territory. There is no evidence that these were exarch-like plenipotentiaries, however, but rather that Heraclius was replacing civil (and some military?) personnel who had proved unreliable in the crisis. Kaegi notes that Arabic sources mention officers dispatched to take charge of regions referred to as the Ajnad (early Muslim military provinces) of Damascus, Emesa, and Palestine;<sup>20</sup> and as I have also recently suggested, modifying and extending a line of argument first elaborated by Irfan Shahîd, these were districts established by the conquerors on the preexisting pat-

<sup>19</sup>For a good survey of the role and position of the thematic *strategoi* in the 9th to 11th centuries, see Ahrweiler, "Recherches" (cited note 12 above), 36ff; for the 7th and 8th centuries, see Winkelmann, *Rang- und Ämterstruktur* (138–140), who stresses the almost entirely military character of the functions of these officers, even at the end of the 9th century. The *Kletorologion* of Philotheos, compiled in 899, lists the "bureau" of the thematic *strategos* as consisting of entirely military or paramilitary officials; the civilian and judicial officials of the theme are listed separately, under their respective central bureaux. See N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe-Xe siècles* (Paris, 1972), 109.16–111.5; cf. 113.28ff (general *logothesion*, including chartularies of provincial treasuries and thematic *epoptai*, tax assessors, and *dioiketai*, fiscal administrators); 115.14 (chartularies of the bureau of the military *logothesion*, based in the *themata*); 121.6 (*protonotarioi* of the bureau of the *sakellion*, based in the *themata*). While it is clear from the *Taktika* of Emperor Leo VI, and a range of other sources of the 9th and 10th centuries, that the *strategos* was the chief imperial official in his theme (see *Leonis imperatoris tactica*, in PG 107, cols. 672–1120 [also *Leonis imperatoris tactica*, ed. R. Vári, I (proem., const. 1–11); II (const. 12–13, 14, 1–38) (*Sylloge Tacticorum Graecorum*, III) (Budapest, 1917–22)], see 680, 684 for example, and Ahrweiler's comments, "Recherches," 36–38, with the sources cited), his civil authority remained mostly supervisory and delegated, and the entirely military nature of his command establishment in the later 9th century implies an originally entirely military function, even if in practice his authority was more extended than this at times.

<sup>20</sup>See W. E. Kaegi, Jr., "Changes in Military Organization and Daily Life on the Eastern Frontier," in *He Kathemerine Zoe sto Byzantio*, 507–21; also idem, "The Frontier: Barrier or Bridge?" in *Seventeenth International Byzantine Congress, Major Papers* (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1986), 279–303. It is possible that the passing reference to a "general" captured by the Persians on Rhodes in the later eastern chronicle of Thomas of Emesa refers to such an officer. It is certainly far too vague to provide reliable evidence of the presence of a "thematic" organization established already by Heraclius, as suggested by M. Oeconomides and Ph. Drososyianni, "A Hoard of Gold Byzantine Coins from Samos," *RN*, 6e sér. 31 (1989), 145–82, see 172–73. For Thomas of Emesa: *Chronica minora*, II, ed. E. W. Brooks, trans. J.-B. Chabot (CSCO, Scriptores Syri, 3; 4) (Louvain, 1904).

tern of the older *ducatus limitaneorum* established in the same areas (probably somewhat restructured under Heraclius, but carrying on essentially the same functions as before).<sup>21</sup> It is highly likely, following Kaegi's reasoning, that the *magistri militum* in command of the various forces which were withdrawn into Anatolia were granted similar powers, and for much the same reasons, and that the origins (and the change in the terms used to describe them, from *stratelates* or *magister militum* to *strategos*) of their later authority as general governors is to be found in the officially recognized but still somewhat ad hoc arrangements adopted by the imperial government at this time.

The theme system thus came into being as armies were billeted across Asia Minor, in the first instance, through a process by which civil administration was subordinated to military priorities and interests, and by which the groups of provinces occupied by each of the late Roman field armies came collectively to be known by the name of that army. The civil administration, modified in various ways, especially in respect of fiscal administration, which was the state's overriding interest,<sup>22</sup> subsisted in an increasingly altered form until, in the early ninth century, probably, the state introduced a series of measures to update the thematic administration and recognize the nature and form of the changes which had taken place.

#### IV. THE STATE AND ITS ARMIES—A CRISIS OF RESOURCES

It is clear that in carrying out this planned withdrawal the state had to face the problems of both supplying and recruiting its forces in the territory which remained under imperial authority and effective political and fiscal control. And it is at precisely this point that the question of the sources of income, equipment, and provisions for the armies has to be raised. The problem of the origins of the so-called military lands, and more recently what has been identified as the clearly related problem of the role of the *kommerkiarioi*, have played a central role in this connection.

In spite of two attempts recently to reassert the possibility that the emperors in the seventh century deliberately settled troops on the land as a means of providing for their upkeep, there is, as far as I can see, no hint of any formal settling of soldiers by the state on a massive scale of the sort favored by Ostrogorsky and, latterly, both Hendy and Treadgold. Let us look at these two, in part complementary, arguments in greater detail.

First, as a result of a dramatic fall in the gold reserves from the later years of the sixth century,<sup>23</sup> the state was compelled to start paying the soldiers at least partly in copper rather than gold or silver. Gold continued to be paid out on a restricted basis, of course, especially for donatives. But from the early 640s—when, as has been shown, the state could afford to issue its armies with only one third of the usual accessional

<sup>21</sup> For Shahîd's argument, see I. Shahîd, "Heraclius and the Theme System: New Light from the Arabic," *Byzantion* 67 (1987), 391–403; idem, "Heraclius and the Theme System: Further Observations," *Byzantion* 69 (1989), 208–43; for an alternative explanation, J. F. Haldon, "Seventh-Century Continuities and Transformations: The Ajnâd and the 'Thematic Myth'" (in preparation).

<sup>22</sup> See Hendy, *Studies*, 157ff, 406–29; Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 173ff.

<sup>23</sup> The evidence has been discussed in detail most recently by Hendy, *Studies*, 494, 625–26; see also Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 223–25. The fall off begins in the later 6th century, but worsens considerably from the 620s to the 640s and beyond.

donative—the finances of the state must have been near collapse.<sup>24</sup> Some changes in the mode of maintaining and equipping the armies appear to date from this period.

The state may have reduced the burden on the fisc by paying the troops on a rotational basis, according to one suggestion, at least for extraordinary payments such as donatives (which were normally issued on a quinquennial basis and on the occasion of imperial accessions).<sup>25</sup> But this can hardly have affected the normal maintenance costs of the armies. Reducing the numbers of troops may also have been considered, and indeed carried out in certain areas, but there were again obvious limits, given the situation and the effectiveness of Muslim attacks, to this alternative.

On the other hand, a reversion to the payment of the field forces largely or entirely in kind would have gone much of the way to solve the problem. The permanent establishment of ad hoc praetorian prefects attached to each field army in the sixth century to ensure that they were adequately supplied—a point first brought out clearly by

<sup>24</sup>For the accessional donative, see Cedrenus (*Compendium historiarum*, 2 vols., Bonn ed. [1838–39]), I, 753, and Hendy's comment, *Studies*, 625; already in Heraclius' reign, in 615 probably, the state had reduced civil and military *rhogai* by up to 50%, suggestive of the nature of the crisis at that point—see *Chronicon Paschale*, Bonn ed. (1832), 706. As a further illustration of the state's difficulties, scholars have traditionally cited, apart from Heraclius' borrowing church plate to help his war effort (*Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. [Leipzig, 1883–85], 302.34–303.3), his supposed order to have the bronze statue known as the ox melted down for coin to pay the forces in the Pontus (on which see Kaegi, "Two Studies," 90ff; but see P. Speck, "War Bronze ein knappes Metall? Die Legende vom Stier auf dem Bus in den 'Parastaseis' 42," *Hellenika* 39 [1988], 3–17, who shows that the text in question has been misunderstood—it refers to a legend that Heraclius melted down a bronze statue into a strongbox for the coin with which the troops in the Pontus were to be paid. Whether this hypothesis is correct or not, Speck is certainly correct to argue that bronze would hardly be so rare for coining as to require the melting down of antique statuary). The shortage of gold—or at any rate cash—with which to pay the soldiers had been felt in Maurice's reign, and indeed seems to have been a constant problem for emperors of the period from Justinian on, esp. during the reign of Maurice. See Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 677ff; Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest*, 131ff; M. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian: Theophylact Simocatta on Persian and Balkan Warfare* (Oxford, 1988), 18ff. For attempts by Maurice, for example, to reduce military expenditure, see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 113f; Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 160, 167, 286–87. The establishment of a number of temporary mints, producing predominantly copper (at Alexandretta, Jerusalem, and Constantia, on Cyprus, during the revolt of Heraclius, and at Seleucia/Isaura and Constantia during the Persian war), and clearly connected with military activity, emphasizes the point. See Hendy, *Studies*, 415–17. There are a number of other examples, collected in Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest*, 134–35, showing that this was a constant problem until the last years of Heraclius' reign.

<sup>25</sup>It has been suggested, for example, that the method of paying *themata* on a 4-yearly rotation described by Constantine VII as the "old" system was ultimately connected with an evolved version of the quinquennial donatives. See Hendy, *Studies*, 645–51 for detailed discussion. Hendy's suggestion has been challenged, however: see Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, 395 note 31, who prefers to think that the later 4-yearly cycle was a continuation of the traditional, irregularly paid *rhoga*; and N. Oikonomides, "Middle Byzantine Provincial Recruits: Salary and Armament," in *Gonimos*, 121–36, esp. 122–28. Oikonomides argues, in contrast, that the 4-yearly cycle (or 3-yearly cycle, according to certain Arabic sources) represents a rationalized payment structure for thematic troops called up for campaigns away from their home province. There is something to be said for all three arguments (unfortunately!), since it seems clear that Hendy's analysis of the cycle, which is given in a 10th-century text compiled by Constantine VII (*Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae libri duo*, Bonn ed. [1829], I, 493–94; new ed. *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, ed. J. F. Haldon [CFHB 28] [Vienna, 1990], [C]647–652), does represent a very much older structure than those of Constantine's own time; equally, Oikonomides' suggestion makes good sense in regard to both morale and reliability of the troops, and is borne out by circumstantial evidence—see Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest*, 300ff, for the recognition by rulers that the advance payment of the troops generally assured their loyalty.



Kaegi—seems to have continued to play a role in this respect, liaising between the civil administration and the civilian population, on the one hand, and the armies, on the other.<sup>26</sup> That such an official continued to exist until the ninth century is also reasonably clear (at which point he was replaced by a reformed or rationalized establishment headed by, among others, the thematic *protonotarios*).<sup>27</sup> It seems likely that it was the withdrawal of the armies into Asia Minor which marked the moment at which this arrangement became, of necessity, permanent.

At the same time, however, the numismatic evidence shows that finds of copper coin die out almost completely during the later years of Constans II,<sup>28</sup> and the fact of the disappearance of this medium from Anatolian sites over the period in question, together with the proven shortage of gold, would appear to confirm the suggestion that the state began to maintain its forces by some means other than relying upon the use of cash as a means of translating wealth into military effectiveness.

It is thus a reasonable inference that the state faced grave problems in remunerating its armies at this time and thereafter—the massive loss of territories and revenue from the areas overrun by Islam alone must have reduced imperial revenue catastrophically, quite apart from the fiscal problems the state clearly already faced in the later sixth century.<sup>29</sup> And it is equally significant that the districts into which the divisional armies of the various *magistri militum* were withdrawn from 637 or thereabouts appear to have been allotted on the basis of their ability to provide for the needs of the armies in question. The conclusion that the state turned to a system of supporting the armies directly, either through issuing the soldiers with land, according to one theory, or through the levying and distribution of most, if not all, their requirements in kind is unavoidable.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that the later (ninth century and after) term for the regular land-tax assessment was *synone*, whereas in the sixth century and before, this term, rendered in Latin as *coemptio*, referred to the compulsory purchase of provisions, is suggestive.<sup>31</sup> For

<sup>26</sup> See Kaegi, "Two Studies," 103ff.

<sup>27</sup> See above and note 18; and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 201–6.

<sup>28</sup> P. Grierson, "Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire, 498-c.1090," in *Moneta e scambi nell'alto Medioevo* (= *Settimane* 8) (Spoleto, 1960), 411–53, see 436, with table 2; idem, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, II: *Phocas to Theodosius III, 602–717*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1968), 1, 6f; followed and elaborated by Hendy, *Studies*, 496–99; 640f (with the numismatic material from archaeological contexts); see also W. Brandes, *Die Städte Kleinasien im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert* (= *BBA* 56) (Berlin, 1989), esp. 145f.

<sup>29</sup> Hendy estimates a probable revenue loss of as much as three-quarters of the income derived during the 6th century: *Studies*, 620. Even if this is only very approximately correct, it indicates the nature of the problem faced by the state.

<sup>30</sup> For the evidence and discussion of this suggestion, see Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 227f, and 251–53.

<sup>31</sup> On the *synone*, see G. Ostrogorsky, "Die ländliche Steuergemeinde des byzantinischen Reiches im X. Jahrhundert," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 20 (1927), 1–108, esp. 49ff, 60f; idem, "Das Steuersystem im byzantinischen Altertum und Mittelalter," *Byzantion* 6 (1931), 229–40, see 232; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 5ff. F. Dölger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts* (= *ByzArch* 9) (Munich, 1927; Hildesheim, 1960), 51ff, 78, saw the middle Byzantine *synone* still as a compulsory purchase, but there is adequate evidence from the 9th and 10th centuries to show that the term had a broader significance than this: see Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 231 and note 74. The entry "synone" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan et al., 3 vols. (New York-

in the so-called Farmer's Law, which probably dates to the later seventh or first half of the eighth century, the term used to describe the ordinary state land-tax levy imposed upon the village community is *ta extraordinaria*, a Greek rendering of the Latin term *extraordinaria*, a word used to describe precisely such exceptional levies or impositions in kind in the sixth century and before.<sup>32</sup> This can only be explained by assuming that the state, faced with a drastic shortage of cash, adopted one of the procedures suggested already, returning to a system familiar from the fifth and especially the fourth century, of provisioning and, as we shall see in a moment, equipping its troops in kind. Some payments in gold continued, of course. The legal texts refer to soldiers being remunerated by both *annonai* and by a *rhoga*. But payments in kind appear to have become a major element in the state's fiscal operations.<sup>33</sup> And a regularized extraordinary levy in kind to maintain the newly transferred field armies—referred to initially quite accurately (according to traditional usage) as the *coemptio* or *synone*—thus becomes in the course of time the main form in which the land tax was actually assessed, levied, and distributed.<sup>34</sup>

An objection to this is the fact that the collection and distribution of supplies in kind to the armies would be very expensive in respect of transport and storage. In other circumstances this would be true, since the movement of large amounts of produce overland to central points at which troops were assembled would indeed be very costly.

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Oxford, 1991), 3: 1994f, understandably does not make this distinction clear. For the Thracian exception to the generalized application of *coemptio*, see *CI (CIC II)*, Bk. 10, ch. 27.1–10 (a. 491–505).

<sup>32</sup>W. Ashburner, "The Farmers' Law," *JHS* 30 (1910), 85–108; 32 (1912), 68–95; repr. in Zepos, *Jus II*, 63–71, see cap. 19 (Zepos, *Jus II*, 66). The point was not lost on Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 40, 41 note 1, who notes the fact that the Farmer's Law makes no reference at all to *synone/coemptio* in the traditional sense.

<sup>33</sup>See *Ecloga. Das Gesetzbuch Leons III. und Konstantinos' V.*, ed L. Burgmann (= *Forschungen zur byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte* 10) (Frankfurt a. M., 1983), 16.4; also 16.1, 2; the text was first discussed by Karayannopoulos and later by Antoniadis-Bibicou: see note 56 below. The second text is edited and discussed by D. Simon, "Byzantinische Hausgemeinschaftsverträge," in *Beiträge zur europäischen Rechtsgeschichte und zum geltenden Zivilrecht: Festgabe für J. Sontis* (Munich, 1977), 91–128, see 94 (A)2, 7; (B)4 (an 8th-century legal decision, attributed to Leo III and Constantine V, appended in its older form to manuscripts of the *Ecloga* as article 19 of that codification).

<sup>34</sup>It is important to note that the change in terminology outlined here occurred at the same time that the older system of tax assessment—the so-called *capitatio-iugatio* system—seems to have been modified very drastically. The reasons for this are complex and do not directly concern us here, but one of the key elements must have been the much greater proportion of surplus wealth extracted in the form of *coemptio* to support the armies in their "thematic" situation. See Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte*, 115 with literature; and in detail Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 141–52. Note also that the 9th-century Arab geographer Ibn Khurradadhbih, the first version of whose work was compiled ca. 846, includes a passage from an older source (and one which can certainly be regarded as valid for the 8th century) which remarks on the assessment of a regular tax collected in kind (grains) for the provisioning of the army and placed in granaries or storehouses. See Abū'l-Kāsim 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh b. Khurradadhbih, *Kitāb at-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik*, in *Bibliotheca Geographorum Araborum*, ed. M.-J. De Goeje (Leyden, 1870–94); nunc continuata consultantibus R. Blachère (etc.) (Leyden, 1938–39), VI, Fr. trans. 76–85, see 83. That this refers to the *synone* seems clear, the more so since almost contemporary letters of the deacon Ignatios of Nicaea refer to the collection of the regular *synone* (which he also calls *sitarchia*) in kind, assessed on church tenants at the rate of 6 modioi per person (Ignatios complains that even babies and the very old were counted in the assessment, but—unless it be taken as a reflection of the often drastic demands of the state—this may be merely a piece of literary hyperbole), recorded and accurately registered (so that imperial officials should not claim that it had not already been delivered); and stocked in imperial storehouses or treasuries—*en tou tou demosiou tameiois*. See Ignatius Diaconus, *Epistolai*, ed. M. Gedeon, in *Nea Bibliothēke Ekklesiastikon Eggraphēon*, I, 1 (Constantinople, 1903), 1–64: see ep. 7.20–26; 8.10–12.

And if the state were trying to save its resources, this would seem to be a very inefficient way of achieving this end. But the situation of the seventh century, combined with what we know of the actual distribution of thematic forces in the eighth century and later, provides an adequate explanation. For it is quite clear that the various units which made up each field division were themselves spread across the areas in which they were based. And this meant that the supplies collected could be consumed locally and would not need to be transported great distances. Kaegi long ago pointed out that the thematic system, with its soldiers and units spread across great tracts of the country, was in fact quite an inefficient way of defending the Anatolian hinterland, although it was efficacious in protecting local strongpoints and the indigenous population.<sup>35</sup>

But if we ask why, given this relative strategic inefficiency, the soldiers were so widely dispersed, the answer lies in just this need to minimize the costs of transporting provisions and to attain the closest relationship possible between each unit or group of units and the districts from which they were to be supported. In other words, the dispersal of the thematic forces across the provinces they “garrisoned” reflects not only, or even primarily, tactical or strategic planning, but rather the fiscal and logistical priorities of the seventh-century state, at least in the first instance.<sup>36</sup> This dispersal and localization must also have had important consequences for the tactical structure of the armies—the different corps under their respective *magistri militum* were each made up of a variety of types of unit, including heavy and light cavalry, infantry, archers, and so on. How did the process described above affect this structure and, more importantly, to what extent did the traditional armament and tactical function of such units change or evolve in this very different context? This is a difficult question, and one which has not been raised before. I will deal with it briefly later in this paper.

The process through which the soldiers were armed and equipped must also have changed as a result of the abandonment of the traditional system of cash payments and allowances for weapons, mounts, and clothing. And here the significance of the *kommerkiarioi*, whose lead seals become frequent from the middle years of the seventh century, may be relevant. Several historians have noted that certain seals become prominent at this time, seals on which there is an explicit association between an imperial *apothēke* and

<sup>35</sup> Kaegi, “Some Reconsiderations on the Themes” (cited note 13 above).

<sup>36</sup> Direct evidence for the dispersal of the soldiers is rare. The Life of Philaretos (see M.-H. Fourmy and M. Leroy, “La vie de S. Philarète,” *Byzantion* 9 [1934], 85–170, see 125.34ff), written in the first half of the 9th century about events of the second half of the 8th century, refers to the *stratopedon* of the region where a poor soldier, Mousoulaios, served. The word *stratopedon* is ambiguous, since it can mean either military camp or army. My own preference is the second meaning, so that the text is referring to the dispatch of a group of officers from the thematic headquarters (presumably—the text says nothing of where these men came from) to muster the troops dwelling in the region. The circumstances of the account support this—a “chiliarch,” together with a hekatontarch and a pentekontarch made up the group (although the Life should not be taken too literally in respect of such details), and this hardly suggests a very large force to be mustered. Furthermore, the account implies that Mousoulaios was on his way to the muster—the presumption must be that it was from his home or village, since if there was a “camp” the muster would have been there. This hardly fits with the idea of a permanent military garrison located at a specific point in the region; but nor does it contradict the possibility that the state still regarded such soldiers as its “regulars,” making up its field armies, even if the reality was somewhat different. See Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 67 and 75; Ahrweiler, “Recherches,” 8–9. There is, incidentally, no contradiction in this line of reasoning, unless one takes the word “garrison” to mean a single concentration of soldiers, as does R.-J. Lilie, in *BSI* 41 (1980), 245.

a region, or group of provinces within the empire, and which suggest that one official, sometimes a group of officials, had jurisdiction over a number of dispersed areas.<sup>37</sup> Contrary to the received view that these are connected with imperial control over trading in luxury or other goods, Hendy has suggested that the *apothekai* may represent a system for the disposal of surplus materials from state workshops (silks, gold- and silverware, dyed cloths, and so forth). Private merchants might also have an interest in these state depots and the system they represented.<sup>38</sup> More importantly for our concerns, Hendy has also argued that the *apotheke* system and its *kommerkiarioi* were connected with supplying the imperial armies. On a number of occasions, dated seals of *kommerkiarioi* and *apothekai* for particular areas can be related to specific military undertakings mentioned in the sources and connected with those areas; and the inference is that the *kommerkiarioi* were entrusted with the sale of equipment and weapons to the soldiers.<sup>39</sup> While not every such seal can be tied in to a particular military undertaking, the number of those that can is impressive, and the connection is too strong simply to be dismissed as coincidence.

Oikonomides has raised some objections to this idea, however, particularly with regard to the correlation between certain campaigns and the dates of the seals (by indicitional year) associated by Hendy with them.<sup>40</sup> But while this example may not be as good an illustration of Hendy's argument as he suggested originally, Oikonomides' remaining suggestions are equally hypothetical and certainly dubious, especially as regards the movement of the *apothekai* and the *kommerkiarioi*, as evidenced in the seals, and representing supposedly a movement of the silk industry itself away from the war zone, from the Anatolian to the Balkan region in the period from the later seventh century to the middle of the eighth century.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the seals of this institution seem rather to

<sup>37</sup>See G. Zacos and A. Vegliery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, vol. I, pts. 1–3 (Basel, 1972), pt. 1, 135–36, 153f; W. Seibt, in *JÖB* 30 (1981), 359 (review of Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*); Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform," 32–34; Hendy, *Studies*, 626ff; N. Oikonomides, "Silk Trade and Production in Byzantium from the Sixth to the Ninth Century: The Seals of Kommerkiarioi," *DOP* 40 (1986), 33–53. W. Brandes (Frankfurt) is currently preparing a specific study of this phenomenon.

<sup>38</sup>Hendy's arguments here are, in my view, entirely convincing: *Studies*, 627–29.

<sup>39</sup>Hendy, *Studies*, 654ff. Seibt (review in *JÖB* 30 [1981], 359) suggests that the *kommerkiarioi* were also responsible for the actual provisioning of the armies. On the whole, and given the continued existence of the thematic/provincial ad hoc prefects already referred to, whose task this would have been, I think this unlikely.

<sup>40</sup>Oikonomides, "Silk Trade and Silk Production in Byzantium," 34ff. The problem concerns the dates of events regarding the Slavs who had been settled in Asia Minor by Justinian II in 688/9 or 689/90 and who, Hendy argues, were settled as soldiers and equipped by the *kommerkiarios* George for the campaign of 694/5. The argument appears to depend upon a somewhat forced emendation of the text of Theophanes. Since this article appeared, another dated seal of a *kommerkiarios* has been published, dating to the 7th indiction (693/4), and throwing weight behind Oikonomides' critique of Hendy's Slav soldiers hypothesis: see S. Bendall, "Slaves or Soldiers?" *Nomismatika Chronika* 8 (1989), 41–42.

<sup>41</sup>I have dealt with the objections to Oikonomides' arguments against Hendy in *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 235–38. Very briefly, Oikonomides suggests that the *kommerkiarioi* were connected only with the silk industry, except on rare occasions when they dealt with other wares (such as Slav prisoners/slaves, for example); and the movement westward of seals of both these officers and the *kommerkia* which they presumably administered reflects a movement westward away from a war zone (in Anatolia) to peaceful regions. Historically, this does not work, since the Balkans were equally badly affected by warfare throughout the 8th century; more importantly, perhaps, it does not work from the point of view of silk production, which is a long-term, costly investment, requiring specific climatic conditions (or, at the least, carefully controlled

follow the warfare, as the strategic priorities of the empire move from one front to the other at this time, a fact which surely reinforces Hendy's basic argument.<sup>42</sup> And while this is not to say either that the *apothekai* were connected only with the provision of military equipment, I have further argued that with the cessation of cash grants for equipment and weapons, the latter had to be supplied and distributed in kind as well, and the *apotheke* system provided an appropriate and available structure for this.

But I do not believe, as Hendy has also suggested, that the state sold weapons and equipment through the *kommerkiarioi* to the soldiers, who paid with revenue from their lands.<sup>43</sup> As we shall see, some soldiers might indeed have held land and may well have been able to purchase equipment privately or through the *kommerkiarioi*. But there are also objections to the majority having been in this position, objections which I have outlined elsewhere. Indeed, since nearly all the known arms- and armor-manufactories of the empire lay by this time in hostile territory, or areas so exposed to hostile action that they can hardly have remained operational,<sup>44</sup> where were these weapons and other types of equipment to be purchased? The state must have had to turn to provincial, and therefore private (even if supervised) production, and the *kommerkiarioi*, with their local subordinates and their storehouses, would have made ideal middlemen to whom the state could farm out this task.

According to an alternative suggestion (which will be discussed below), soldiers were given land on imperial estates from which to support themselves.<sup>45</sup> But even with ten-

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and relatively expensive artificially maintained conditions, both for the mulberry trees and for the silk worms themselves). See A. Muthesius, "From Seed to Samite: Aspects of Byzantine Silk Production," *Textile History* 20.2 (1989), 135–49; eadem, *History of the Byzantine Silk Industry* (Vienna, forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr. Muthesius for much valuable discussion on this subject.

<sup>42</sup>For the movement of the main front to the Balkans from the 730s and 740s, see Zacos and Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals* 1.1, 138ff; followed by Hendy, *Studies*, 654 note 438; generally, Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte*, 139ff. Other examples, not cited by Hendy, tend to reinforce rather than weaken his proposal. A seal of 741/2 for the imperial *kommerkia* of the Thrakesion *thema*, for example (Zacos and Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, 195 and no. 261), may well represent Constantine V's efforts to prepare a counterattack against the usurper Artavasdos, whose rebellion in the Opsikion district began soon after the death of Leo III in the summer of 741 (see P. Speck, *Artavasdos, der rechtgläubige Vorkämpfer der göttlichen Lehren* [= Poikila Byzantina 2] [Bonn, 1982], 71ff; for Constantine's support in Thrakesion see Theophanes [ed. de Boor], 414.31–33). Equally, a seal of either 741/2 or 742/3, for the imperial *kommerkia* of Thessaloniki, and issued under Artavasdos and his son Nikephoros (*ibid.*, 195, and no. 262), may be connected with the same events (Artavasdos sent via the *patrikios* and *magistros ek prosopou* in Constantinople, who had taken his side, to his son Nikephoros, who was *strategos* of Thrace at the time, asking him to collect his troops for the defense of Constantinople: see Theophanes, 415.12ff). Similarly, a seal of the imperial *kommerkia* of the eparchies of the God-guarded imperial Opsikion, dated 745/6 (*ibid.*, 195, and no. 263), may well be connected with Constantine V's attack on north Syria and Germanikeia—see Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte*, 139; Theophanes, 422.11–13. Of course, the *kommerkiarioi* or *kommerkia* in question may also have carried on other functions as well as organizing or administering the supply of military equipment, esp. arms, to soldiers; but the coincidence of date, place, and event is again striking.

<sup>43</sup>Hendy, *Studies*, 633ff.

<sup>44</sup>See Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 239. In the 10th century, at least one of these establishments—that at Caesarea in Cappadocia—appears to have been operational once more, and may therefore have been only temporarily disrupted: see the reference to imperial armormakers as *exkoussatoi* in a mid-10th century letter of Archbishop Basil Elachistos (R. Cantarella, "Basilio Minimo. II," *BZ* 26 (1926), 3–34, letter to the emperor Constantine VII). See below, note 130.

<sup>45</sup>Hendy, *Studies*, 637ff; Treadgold, "The Military Lands and the Imperial Estates in the Middle Byzantine Empire" (cited note 15 above).

ants to carry on their agricultural labor and produce an income for them (equivalent, in effect, to the later *pronoia*), it is difficult to see how such holdings came to be reduced to the degree of penury implicit in the case of the soldier Mousoulis and others from the later eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>46</sup> For surely in making such grants the state would have taken some steps to protect such lands against alienation and impoverishment, and there is not a shred of evidence that such measures (such as were taken in the tenth century, for example) were carried out. The provision of soldiers with land (as opposed to the acquisition by soldiers of land through other means) can at best have been a slow and partial process.

Indeed, the available textual evidence from the eighth and ninth centuries is either silent on the relationship between soldiers and land, or positively assumes that there was no connection between land and military service. There was, as we shall also see in a moment, no *obligation* upon soldiers' families to support them, even if they often did contribute toward their upkeep and maintenance.

The probability thus remains strongest that it was indeed the *kommerkiarioi* who supplied the troops with their equipment by means of requisitions and the extraction by the state through these officials of certain forms of tax or corvée (both in materials and in the skills and labor required to produce finished goods). We know in some detail how this system operated in the later ninth and tenth centuries, albeit no longer through the *kommerkiarioi*, and it involved in effect the state, through the local military administration in each province, contracting out the production of certain quantities and types of weapon or items of equipment.<sup>47</sup> This is very different from the more centralized and more strictly controlled system of production based upon an imperial monopoly in state-controlled *fabricae* or manufactories, which had operated until the first half of the seventh century and which is described in some detail in both narrative and legislative sources.<sup>48</sup> And it seems highly likely that it was during the seventh century that this new system itself came into being, as we know so many other aspects of the middle Byzantine administrative apparatus did too.

The conclusion is, of course, that the state did not need to issue soldiers with land to maintain them properly. But other arguments for the state's issuing soldiers with land have also been adduced. Both Hendy and Treadgold, for example, have suggested that the state settled soldiers on land which belonged to the imperial estates, pointing out that, whereas in the sixth century and before the state seems to have possessed fairly extensive lands in the provinces of Asia Minor (in particular in Bithynia, Caria, Pamphylia, Phrygia Salutaris, Pontus, and Cappadocia I and II), it appears to have had no such lands by the twelfth century. The difference has been explained by the plausible

<sup>46</sup> Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 50f, 58, and the discussion below.

<sup>47</sup> In the 9th and 10th centuries, it was just such a system, supervised ultimately by the theme *strategos*, which operated and through which the state armed its soldiers. See Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 319–22; idem, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 238–42; idem, ed., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, 236.

<sup>48</sup> See Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 670–71; Justinian, *Nov.* 85.1; Maurice, *Strategikon* (*Das Strategikon des Maurikios*, ed. G. T. Dennis, trans. E. Gamillscheg [= CFHB 17] [Vienna, 1981]), I, 2.11; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 318ff.

suggestion that such estate land was granted away by the emperors to soldiers in return for military service.<sup>49</sup>

Now there is no reason to reject this hypothesis in its entirety. There is no doubt that the state did give land to individuals, from among whom it intended to recruit soldiers. Emperor Maurice is supposed to have decreed the forced transfer of a number of Armenian families to Thrace so that soldiers could be raised from them. There are other examples from the sixth century.<sup>50</sup> It is likewise apparent that the Slavs whom Justinian II transferred to various districts of Anatolia in 688/9 or 689/90, together with their families, also provided soldiers. Nor is there any reason to doubt that the only means of supporting such large numbers would have been by grants of land. The principle is fairly clear and has been discussed in detail by several historians—to draft in new populations, whole communities and families, from among whom soldiers could be conscripted. In the tenth century, it is clear that the practice of granting land to refugees, whether or not in return for state service, was well established.<sup>51</sup>

But one point needs to be stressed. In the case of mass settlement, these were ethnic groups and, if the Slavs of the second half of the seventh century are anything to judge by, were organized as such under their own leaders, similarly to the late Roman *foederati* or, much more probably, the *laeti* (less independent) of the Western Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>52</sup> Like the earlier *laeti*, the Slavs were intended by Justinian II to operate in conjunction with Byzantine troops. Similar examples, from areas outside the empire, suggest that the practice was not unusual in this period of generalized demographic decline and manpower shortage.<sup>53</sup> So that while it is not, in itself, a new principle, neither must it be seen as a generalized means of recruitment and supporting

<sup>49</sup> See the references to Hendy and Treadgold in note 45 above.

<sup>50</sup> For Maurice's order, see F. Macler, trans., *Sébéos, Histoire d'Héraclius* (Paris, 1904), 54f; Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian*, 127f, 147, 177.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, P. Charanis, "Ethnic Changes in the Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century," *DOP* 13 (1959), 23–44, repr. in idem, *Studies on the Demography of the Byzantine Empire* (London, 1972), II; idem, "The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3.2 (1961), 140–54, repr. in his *Studies*, pt. III; H. Ditten, "Zur Bedeutung der Einwanderung der Slawen," in Winkelmann et al., *Byzanz im 7. Jahrhundert*, 73–160, see esp. 151–57, and 152–54, with extensive literature and the relevant sources, on the transfer under Justinian II in 688/9. For the 10th century, see the passage at *De Cer.*, 694.22–695.14, and the discussion below.

<sup>52</sup> For the ways in which such federate bands were organized and supported, see Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 612.13; the *laeti* were barbarian prisoners or refugees, occasionally also voluntarily admitted to Roman territory, settled in the empire, placed under prefects responsible for one or more groups across a province, and given lands (*terrae laeticae*), in return for providing recruits for the army; see Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 620; Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte* (cited note 1 above), 207ff. Federates were settled in both halves of the empire during the 5th century; and while the institution of *laeti* is known only from the West, in particular Gaul and Italy, the principle cannot have been unknown in the East: the transfers of population of the 7th century appear to have followed along remarkably similar lines. For the 3rd to the 5th century there are many examples: see E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire I: De l'état romain à l'état byzantin (284–476)*, ed. J.-R. Palanque (Paris-Bruges, 1959; Amsterdam, 1968), 78, 233; II: *de la disparition de l'empire d'Occident à la mort de Justinien (476–565)* (Paris-Bruxelles-Amsterdam, 1949; Amsterdam, 1968), 42, note 2.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, the case noted by T. S. Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy, A.D. 554–800* (Rome, 1984), 88 and note 14: the Duke of Istria settled Slavs on deserted lands in the 8th century.

soldiers through grants of land, for which there is, of course, no evidence at all. In fact, the probability that the captured Slavs were given land on a "laetic" basis makes the idea that the land they were given was drawn from imperial estates more likely. For part of the purpose of introducing such new populations—as the sources sometimes state explicitly—was the revitalization of the rural population and the bringing back into cultivation of abandoned or deserted lands from which the state could then derive a revenue. Imperial lands paid not only regular taxes, of course; the tenants also paid a rent to the relevant state bureau. Such a policy will thus have been to the considerable advantage of the state.

But once again, I do not believe that this can have accounted for more than a relatively small proportion of the total number of soldiers. Perhaps more importantly, there is nothing in the tenth-century legislation, nor in the evidence which I shall consider in a moment from the eighth and ninth centuries, to suggest that this sort of arrangement lies behind the "military lands" of the later period.

Finally, the clear evidence for a personal and hereditary military obligation during the eighth and ninth centuries, together with the fact that the Macedonian legislation states quite explicitly that until the time of Constantine VII the military lands were neither protected by law nor did they have any special juridical status, an important point recently emphasized once again by Górecki, makes any argument to the effect that such lands had been established in the seventh century as a deliberate act of policy quite untenable.<sup>54</sup>

## V. THE QUESTION OF THE ORIGINS OF THE "MILITARY LANDS"

For the purposes of the present discussion we will define "military lands" in the simplest sense as holdings of varying extent, held by a person who was entered in the military registers as owing military service hereditarily to the state, which service was supported in respect of basic equipment and, to a degree, provisions, from the income derived from that land. Eventually, the land itself came to be regarded as inalienable.

What evidence is there, therefore, for the relationship between soldiers and land? It derives largely from a small number of legal texts, probably of the first half of the eighth century, from hagiography, and from individual references in letters or in narrative histories and chronicles, until we meet the legislation of the Macedonian emperors in the tenth century. As we will see below, the late Roman evidence for soldiers' fiscal status and land is also relevant.<sup>55</sup> From all this material, I think we are justified in drawing the following conclusions.

In the first place, there seems little doubt that by about 740, and probably already well before this time, some soldiers were being supported for their military service by their families and relatives. By the same token, it appears that they could also own their arms and military equipment (a clear contrast with the earlier period, when such items always remained ultimately the property of the state); and that they were expected to

<sup>54</sup>A point emphasized by Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform," 201 note 98; "Die byzantinischen Staatsfinanzen," 50–51. For Górecki's views, see below with notes 74 and 76.

<sup>55</sup>The sources, with minor exceptions to be introduced below, are discussed in detail in Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 41–76. The hereditary element will be addressed below.



replace items of equipment and mounts at their own expense. Two legal texts of this time in particular, which I will examine in greater detail below, make this abundantly clear. But there was no obligation on the families of soldiers to support them—both texts in question deal with the consequences of what we would term breaches of contract between different members of such families regarding the outgoings on equipment provided by the household, the income from booty and state payments received by the soldier, and the degree of reciprocity between the two.

The first of the two texts has been dated by its editor to approximately the middle of the eighth century, probably to the joint reigns of Leo III and Constantine V.<sup>56</sup> It represents a ruling on an obligation outstanding between a soldier and his father-in-law, in which the latter's contribution to the soldier's military service and the appropriate level of compensation is at issue. The key element lies in the fact that the father-in-law has the right to receive back a proportion of what he invested in his son-in-law's maintenance and equipment, if the latter later leaves the household. The assumption behind the ruling is that the agreement by which the son-in-law moved into his father-in-law's household is now ended—and that the son-in-law is therefore no longer contributing to the household. There is no need to assume, of course, that the household was in any way *obliged* to support the soldier: the ruling merely represents the conditions under which a mutually beneficial contractual arrangement could be terminated.

The second text comes from the legal compilation the *Ecloga*, issued by Leo and Constantine in 741, chapter 6.2, and deals with the case of brothers, one a soldier, who jointly inherit the parental estate and household.<sup>57</sup> It illustrates a similar point as in the first text. Here the ruling is that the brother in military service, and those who continue to work the land or farm the estate (the extent to which those involved are landlords or actual peasant exploiters is unclear), should divide their incomes equally if (in the absence of any formal agreement stipulating otherwise) the soldier decides to leave the household permanently within ten years of the parents' decease. If the separation occurs between ten and thirteen years of this event, the same division occurs, with the proviso that the soldier retain his military equipment, which is exempted from the division of property. If the separation occurs after a period of thirteen years or more of common ownership of the parental estate, then the soldier is to retain everything he has earned as a soldier after the said thirteenth year.

Two points need to be made. First, the soldier's income was regarded as contributory to the common household; concomitantly, the soldier is clearly regarded as being supported by the household, at least to a degree—this is certainly the case in the first text referred to above. If this were not the case, there would have been little purpose to the legislation, which appears to have been established to regulate a problem which might arise or had already arisen. The soldier would simply have kept his military equipment

<sup>56</sup> Edited by D. Simon, "Byzantinische Hausgemeinschaftsverträge," see 94, and note 33 above for context and date of the text. Apart from Simon's commentary and discussion (*ibid.*, 95–100), the text has also been discussed by Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform," 196f, and Oikonomides, "Middle Byzantine Provincial Recruits," 130ff.

<sup>57</sup> Ed. Burgmann, 220–222 (see note 33 above). The text was first drawn upon briefly by Karayannopoulos, "Contribution" (see note 9 above), 498–99, although he passed over the importance of the text in this respect; and by Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Études d'histoire maritime* (see note 12 above), 105–6, who sees it, as does Oikonomides (see below), as evidence for military lands in the formal sense.

and his pay, as well as his share of the inherited property, according to traditional legal prescription. The other brother or brothers would likewise have received their portion, but none of the soldier's income—which, it is important to note, had always enjoyed a specific statute, defined as *peculium castrense/stratitikon pekoulion*, which exempted it from such subdivision or infringement—a statute which *Ecloga* 6.1, immediately preceding the second of these two texts, makes abundantly clear.<sup>58</sup>

Second, since the horse, weapons, and so on are specifically excluded from the division of property (unlike his other income), the implication must surely be that the remaining brother(s) may have had some claim on them. They were therefore specifically exempted in the interests of the state. Again, there is absolutely no reason to think that the household had been in any way *obliged* to support the soldier, a point I have emphasized elsewhere: the specific situation outlined in the *Ecloga* passage means simply that in this case the household had been a supportive element and should therefore receive appropriate compensation for its investment. It is worth emphasizing the fact that, if the subdivision of the property were simply a matter of apportioning the joint wealth of the brothers, the graded nature of the *Ecloga* stipulations would have been irrelevant. Instead, the jurists who drew up the clause clearly saw the need to compensate the household or estate for the soldier's departure up to a period of ten years. Thereafter, the soldier's income was assumed to have covered some aspects of his maintenance, and he kept horse and weapons; after thirteen years, his obligations were quit.

This interpretation is supported by the legal decision attributed to Leo and Constantine mentioned already, which again seeks to regulate a possible conflict of claims over property or income owed to one side or another of two contracting parties. In the case of the *Ecloga* text, the whole point is that there was no written contract, hence conflict might arise.

There is absolutely no suggestion in either case that the household had been originally obliged to support the soldier. Merely that, in the specific examples envisaged (which probably reflect actual cases brought to law), it had contributed to his costs and maintenance in one form or another, and was therefore legally entitled to compensation if the soldier left before he had acquitted his debt. More importantly, the decision attributed to Leo and Constantine contains an implicit emendation of the traditional regulations pertaining to military *peculium*, since it clearly grants the father-in-law a claim on this normally inalienable property of the soldier, whether or not he was still a minor, as the analysis of the text's editor, Dieter Simon, shows. This is crucial. It suggests not only that households could and did support soldiers, but that this contribution had been juridically recognized in the right of the contributing parties to make a claim on the

<sup>58</sup>Soldiers' property derived, by whatever means, through their military service was defined as *idioteton*: see *Ecloga* 16.1; full references (from Codex Justinianus, Basilica, and the so-called military codes) at Halton, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 54 note 94, 71 note 126. This *peculium castrense* was differentiated in classical Roman law from property derived through inheritance or other income not connected with military service. See, for example, J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army, 31 B.C.–A.D. 235* (Oxford, 1984), esp. 231ff, and A. Dain, "Sur le 'peculium castrense'," *REB* 19 (1961), 253–57. See also note 128 below.

hitherto untouchable military *peculium* for recompense.<sup>59</sup> The very fact that such matters appear to have been dealt with in the imperial court, and merited such explicit treatment in the *Ecloga*, is itself not without significance. It suggests that such conflicts were likely to arise more often than just occasionally.

The fact that by the early eighth century (at the latest) soldiers' service could be partly supported by their households is now generally accepted. But there is still no evidence, certainly not from any of the texts discussed so far, that military service was juridically bound to the land, or that families had a formal *obligation* to support a family member who was a soldier. In passages from the Lives of Philaretos, written down in the first half of the ninth century and describing events of the second half of the eighth century, and of Eustratios, composed in the later ninth century and purporting to describe events earlier in the same century, poor soldiers are rescued from disciplinary proceedings at the hands of the local military staff by the saints, who lend their own horses to soldiers whose horses have died. The stories make it quite apparent that these are soldiers who were responsible personally for the maintenance and expenses of their military service, but there is still no formal connection with land evident.<sup>60</sup>

In a letter of 801, to which Oikonomides has drawn attention, Theodore the Studite refers to Empress Irene's abolition of the imposition upon soldiers' widows of payments which appear to have been made in lieu of their deceased husbands' military service.<sup>61</sup> Oikonomides has argued that this text can be understood to imply that a connection already existed from this time, and even from before the reign of Leo III, between military service and soldiers' property; but, although this is a possible interpretation, I would argue that we might equally be faced with a straightforward connection between military service and fiscal compensation imposed on soldiers' families, in which the na-

<sup>59</sup>For the basic elements of military *peculium*, implicitly modified by *Ecloga* 16.2, see the preceding article (16.1). This important change, which can only have been justified legally on the grounds that the contemporary situation and the practices it produced conflicted directly with the traditional legal framework, was noted briefly also by Simon, "Byzantinische Hausgemeinschaftsverträge," 99. Both these texts need also to be understood in the light of traditional practice relating to the rule governing legal associations, reflected partly also in *Peira* 21.3 (p. 81) (Zepos, *Jus* IV, 1–260, following *Bas.* 12, 1.50/7–9, based on *Dig.* 17.2.52, dealing with the partition of property between brothers, one of whom is still subject to the *patria potestas*), according to which the income (*siteresia*) from the *strateia* of a soldier who has joined with a civilian in a formal *koinonia*, a legal association, belongs to the joint property of the said association. In this text, of course, *strateia* might be understood in its specifically 10th-century technical sense, or simply as *militia*, state service.

<sup>60</sup>*Vita Philareti* (ed. Fourmy, Leroy) (cited note 36 above), 125.34ff; *Vita Eustratii*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, in *Analekta Hierosolymitikes Stachylogias*, IV (St. Petersburg, 1891–98), 367–400, see 377.3ff. By the same token, later 9th- and 10th-century Arabic sources, sometimes using much older material from the earlier 9th century or before, refer to the fact that Byzantine provincial soldiers had to provide their own minimum provisions for the first days of the muster: see Ibn Khurradadhbih, 85; Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 45 and note 73. For the Arab geographers, their value and their reliability, see J. F. Haldon, "Kudama Ibn Dja'far and the Garrison of Constantinople," *Byzantion* 48 (1978), 78–90; challenged by W. T. Treadgold, "Notes on the Numbers and Organisation of the Ninth-Century Byzantine Army," *GRBS* 21 (1980), 269–88; vindicated by F. Winkelmann, "Probleme der Informationen des al-Ġarmi über die byzantinischen Provinzen," *BSI* 43 (1982), 18–29; in turn challenged by Treadgold, "Remarks on Al-Jarmi," *BSI* 44 (1983), 205–12.

<sup>61</sup>The letter is in PG 99: 932; new edition by G. Fatouros, *Theodori Studitae Epistulae* (= CFHB 31, 1.2) (Berlin 1992), ep. 7.61–63.

ture and degree of property held by the family in question played no role in the state's calculations, since military service for such soldiers was certainly hereditary.<sup>62</sup> The ways in which the property and in particular the military equipment of soldiers supported by their families in the two legal texts referred to was disposed of would reinforce this suggestion.

Whatever the correct interpretation, there does seem to be clear evidence for soldiers supporting themselves from the early eighth century, and this can reasonably be assumed to be something that was by then already well established. My suggestion is that this developed in the context of the state's difficulties in adequately supplying and provisioning its provincial forces, a reflection of the awful problems of solvency it faced in this period, together with the inevitable and well-known consequences of soldiers' settlement on a permanent basis in the provinces and their consequent embedding in local society. In particular, we must remember that the acquisition of land would have been a perfectly normal consequence, as evidence from the sixth century clearly demonstrates. And soldiers' land would have shared in the special fiscal status granted to soldiers themselves, most particularly in respect of immunity from certain extraordinary *munera*.<sup>63</sup>

But I would still reject any idea of the state formally setting up by legislative act a special category of such soldiers. Indeed, the very heterogeneity of recruitment methods and types of soldier familiar from the eighth, and certainly from the ninth and tenth, century would reinforce this suggestion. Thus it is clear from texts of the later ninth and tenth centuries that there were at least two types of provincial soldier in the "self-supporting" category: some supplied their own equipment and mounts, as well as their provisions; other, poorer soldiers were responsible for their mounts and weapons, but received also *siteresia*, supplies and provisions, from the state. Indeed, two texts strongly suggest that the proportion of soldiers who could actually properly support themselves in provisions, as well as equipment and horse, was quite small. And by the tenth century, if not before, the sources reveal a whole category of soldiers who, while registered on the military rolls, were supplied almost entirely by state impositions (and requisitions) upon the wealthy for horses, equipment, and servants or esquires.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup>Oikonomides, "Middle Byzantine Recruits," 136. He also suggests that the term *oikos* in the *Ecloga* text discussed above might be interpreted as "estate," which is certainly one meaning of the word from the 6th century (see *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, p. 1517). But "household" subsumes also any property, whether in land or movables, attached thereto, and seems to me better, given the uncertainty of our information. On the letter of Theodore the Studite, see also P. Speck, *Kaiser Konstantin VI. Die Legitimation einer fremden und der Versuch einer eigenen Herrschaft* (Munich, 1978), 382, 807 note 392, who interprets it rather as a "death duty" (Totensteuer). But this misses the point of the relationship between military service and soldiers' families implicit in the letter; see also the remarks of the editor of the new edition, vol. I, 150 note 39.

<sup>63</sup>Landholding by soldiers and their families similarly came to underlie military service to a degree in Italy over the same period: see Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers* (see note 1 above), 101–8. For immunity from certain state corvées, see *Dig* 50.5.10 for the 6th century and before, and the references given below. In this regard, it is important to note that soldiers were no different from any other category of persons granted a special fiscal status in respect of their state service: cf. *Dig* 50.6; *CI* 10.66.1 (a. 337); 2 (a. 344), repeated at *Bas.* 54.6

<sup>64</sup>See, for example, *Vita Lucae Stylitae*, ed. H. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites* (= SubsHag, 14) (Brussels, 1923), 195–237: 201.14ff, where Luke is described as subject to military service, but supporting himself in respect

When we look at the measures taken by Emperor Nicephorus I in respect of soldiers' lands and their obligations, we again have the impression that, while the land from which the soldier was supported, or supposed to be supported, was relevant in the state's *fiscal* calculations, it had not yet been related bindingly to military service, which was still attached to the individual soldier. For military service was almost certainly hereditary from the later seventh century at the latest, as I will suggest below, although exactly when it became so is uncertain. It had not been, except by custom in the *limitanei*, in the sixth and early seventh centuries. My own preference is for an early reintroduction, under Heraclius, although there is no explicit evidence for this. R. J. Lilie suggests the reign of Leo IV but, as we will again see below, the letter of Theodore the Studite can be used to demonstrate that it was already in force considerably earlier than this.<sup>65</sup> Either way, the hereditary nature of military service is a crucial element in our understanding of the relationship between soldiers' property and military service.

There are a number of other texts, however, which can shed a little more light on the question of this relationship. Among the notorious "evil deeds" ascribed to Nicephorus I by the chronographer Theophanes was the stipulation that soldiers who could not afford their military equipment and service were to be helped by contributions (the

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of provisions, in contrast to others who, "as was the custom for those who are enrolled," received a *siteresion* from the state. Similarly, the soldier Michael Argyromytes, in the Life of Nikon Metanoites (ed. Sp. Lampros, "O Bios Nikonos tou Metanoite," in Νέος Έλλ. 3 [1906], 129–228), 211.14ff provided his own supplies, and again the hagiographer notes that this is unusual. In the *Taktika* ascribed to Leo VI (see note 19 above), 4.1 and Epilog., 57, the theme *strategos* is instructed to call up for active service from those registered as soldiers only those who were economically able to support their duties adequately; see also the reference to the treatise on skirmishing, below. For those registered, but without adequate equipment, and the imposition upon the wealthier for their mounts and expenses, see Leo, *Takt.* 18, 129f. and esp. 20, 205, with the references in note 97 below.

These definitions are, of course, economic. An alternative is to define the soldiers by function, so that the first two groups above can be seen as having provided the majority of the infantry forces of each province. Some of them will have provided seasonal garrison troops for strong points and fortified places; others, perhaps the less well-off, may have served as servants and esquires to the elite soldiers while on campaign, or as scouts and look-outs along the frontiers, if they inhabited such districts. Another group will have been represented by the full-time, permanent staff and "core" troops of each *thema*, including both the *proeleusimaioi* (retinue or staff) and the *eklektai* or *epilektai* who are referred to in the narrative sources. It is probable that the latter terms are meant to include not only professional volunteers, and poorer draftees equipped by state requisition (referred to above), but a number of the better-armed and equipped thematic *stratiotai* as well—these are the soldiers Leo VI hopes the general will be able to select from his *thema*, and such soldiers are clearly referred to in the later 10th-century treatise on skirmishing warfare dedicated to Emperor Nicephorus II Phocas: see, *Le traité sur la Guérilla (De velitatione) de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963–969)*, ed. G. Dagron and H. Mihăescu (Paris, 1986), cap. 19.3ff (109.18ff) and 184ff. See Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 79 and note 145; *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, 250 with texts.

<sup>65</sup> Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 36ff, with Lilie's criticisms, *BSL*, 41 (1980), 242f; Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform," 199f. See below and note 80. The exact status of the "hereditary" element in the recruitment of *limitanei* remains unclear. Military parentage seems to have been a necessary qualification, but individuals were not obliged to join their fathers' units, even though this often seems in practice to have been the case. Individuals whose fathers had served in units of *comitatenses* would be equally eligible; while sons of *limitanei* were clearly able to advance beyond their original positions in the military establishment in general. For the evidence, see Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 653, 669 with note 145.

form of which is unclear, but to the value of 18½ *nomismata*) to cover their costs and their public taxes.<sup>66</sup>

Two points, however, are generally disregarded in discussions of this passage. First, these measures are in the context of a general calling up of impoverished soldiers, many of whom the state was actually transferring (along with their better-off fellow peasants and comrades-in-arms) from Asia Minor to Thrace, where they were to be resettled. Their poverty was a result of both their original condition and of the forced transfer and selling of their property (for which, the text implies, they were themselves responsible—again, no state-protected “military holding” is envisaged here, although one may read into the text the possibility of a forced sale of property to the state at fixed prices, which affected the better-off in particular).<sup>67</sup> Both of these measures appear to have been novel—not only the contributions of cash to equip the soldiers in question, familiar from tenth-century texts (see below) and known as *syndosia*, but also the communal payment of their normal fiscal dues (the land- and hearth-taxes), familiar in respect of ordinary taxpayers, of course, who were unable to cover their tax payments, but now applied for the first time to poorer members of the community who were also soldiers.<sup>68</sup>

Second, the first part of this order has generally been understood to mean that the emperor wished to recruit previously unregistered poor persons into the army and equip them through communal subscription. As I have argued before, however, this is a most improbable interpretation. It seems much more likely that these “poor” were already registered, but as they were considered unable to provide adequately for their service they were generally not actually called up.<sup>69</sup> Once more, it would seem that while landed property was relevant to the state’s concerns about supporting its armies, there existed even at this stage no firm juridically defined bond between the possession of land and military service. I would argue that Nicephorus’ measure recognized, and was intended to help, the sort of impoverished soldier typified by Mousoulis, mentioned above, and served to bolster considerably the number of soldiers available to local officers and, at the same time, more effectively exploit the resources available to the state. How effective it was is unclear, although a passage from a later ninth-century Life, that of Eustratios, has the saint once more giving his horse to a poor soldier.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup>Theophanes, 486.10ff, esp. 486.23–26; and the discussion of Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 62–64; P. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople. Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1958), 117ff.

<sup>67</sup>Theophanes, 486.10–22. As Speck (*Konstantin VI*, 383 and notes) stresses, of course, the source of Theophanes’ text is particularly hostile to Nicephorus, and presents his measures in the worst possible light. See also Ai. Christophilopoulou, “He oikonomike kai demosionomike politike tou aftokratoros Nicephoros a’,” in *Mélanges K. Amantos* (Athens, 1960), 413–31.

<sup>68</sup>In this respect I would agree rather with F. Dölger (*BZ* 36 [1936], 158) but only partly with Lemerle (*Agrarian History*, 62f, in reference to the payment of the 18 1/2 *nomismata*), who sees nothing new in the communal payment of the taxes of those called up, since he regards them as newly enlisted from among the poor. On Nicephorus’ measures in general, see Christophilopoulou, art. cit.

<sup>69</sup>Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 50 note 87. The verb in question—*strateuesthai*—should be understood as “call up,” rather than “enroll/register” (for the first time). Later texts bear this interpretation out. Lemerle’s view is an unlikely interpretation, since the mass recruitment by conscription of all such poor persons would surely have hopelessly inflated the army and overwhelmed its disciplinary and administrative procedures. On the calling up of those able to cover their service expenses, see the points made in note 64 above.

<sup>70</sup>See above, and *Vita Eustratii*, 377.35ff. Of course, the passage may well be a topos, and this must be borne in mind when dealing with such hagiographical texts. Measures referred to in the *De Ceremoniis* of

The analysis of these texts, and a number of other passages from ninth- and tenth-century saint's Lives and collections of miracles, has shown that until the tenth century there seems to have been no binding legal connection between the possession of land and military service for the types of provincial or thematic soldiers discussed so far. This does not mean that as time passed (i.e., over the eighth and ninth centuries) the state did not come increasingly to view the possession of landed property as an important prerequisite for the registration of soldiers in the thematic armies. Since military service for certain categories of soldier appears to have been hereditary (although it is unclear on what basis the differentiation among such categories was made), the combination of this with the possession of land would, in theory, have ensured the state of a core of soldiers in each district available for local military service, supporting themselves to one level or another, around whom mercenary and short-term recruits could be assembled when necessary. During the first half of the tenth century, however, the state decided to classify these possessions and to formalize the conditions under which they could be held or transferred by registering them (up to a certain value) in the local military and fiscal codices, chiefly to protect them from the expansionist land-grabbing of "the powerful"—a broad category, representing both magnates and lesser local landlords who could expand their own possession at the expense of the weaker members of their fiscal community.<sup>71</sup> The reasons for this action are generally agreed upon. In addition, the

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Constantine VII (*De cer.* 695.21ff) mention the fact that those registered for military service who were not able fully to meet the costs of their duties were to be assisted (fiscally) by the attribution to them of *syndotai* or contributors (from the same fiscal unit, it must be supposed); see also *ibid.*, 660.6–7, where 1,200 soldiers are to be equipped by this means; and the literature in note 72 below. That these measures were not always very effective, or that state officials may often have ignored them in practice, is clear both from the Life of Eustratios, where the poor soldier appears to have received no such assistance, as also from individual references—a letter from Patriarch Nicholas I, for example, asking for release from military obligations on behalf of a widow who cannot afford to equip her son (in J. Darrouzès, *Épistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle* [AOC 6] [Paris, 1960], II, 50.13–131; a similar case in the Life of Euthymios (*Vita Euthymii Iunioris*, ed. L. Petit, "Vie et office de S. Euthyme le jeune," in *ROC* 8 [1903], 155–205, repr. L. Clugnet, in *BHO* 5 [1904], 14–51), 72.19ff. In the later 10th century, the treatise on "guerrilla" or "skirmishing" warfare along the eastern frontier remarks that soldiers, in spite of their fiscal privileges and favored status, might still be oppressed and reduced to penury by state officials (and note that this refers to all soldiers, not just those in possession of "military holdings"). Clearly, whatever measures the state adopted, problems of both application and enforcement away from the capital presented a constant difficulty. See Dagron-Mihăescu, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, cap. 19.6 (109.34ff); also ed. with Eng. trans. by G. T. Dennis, in *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*. Text, trans., and notes (CFHB 25, DOT 9) (Washington, D.C., 1985), 137–239 (text 144–238), see 216/7.

<sup>71</sup>For the process, see Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 41–65; Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform," 199ff. The latter rejects the principle that, as well as defending its recruitment and fiscal base against "the powerful," the state may also have found it more convenient to register land, which could be more readily measured, controlled, and assessed in terms of the burdens attached to it: "Die zweihundertjährige Reform," 201; also *BSI*, 41 (1980), 244. It is important to stress, however, that this reason was never proposed as the first cause or the only reason for the change which, as Lilie quite rightly notes, resulted primarily from the danger presented to the state's resource base by "the powerful." A similar misinterpretation is also made by M. Gregoriou-Ioannidou, *Stratologia kai eggeia stratiotike idioktesia sto Byzantio* (= *Hetaireia Byzantinon Spoudon* 4) (Thessalonike, 1989), 61f, who seems to ignore the fact that, in order to protect the economic base upon which both the recruitment of soldiers and its own income depended, registering the lands in question was the only feasible answer. The argument for "ease of administration" is complementary, not independent.

For the conflict between state interests and those of the powerful, and definition of this group, see

gradual extension of the obligations from individual families to the lands which served as the basis for their service, which seems to have taken place during the first half of the tenth century, also meant a greater flexibility for the state in extracting the resources thus available—the land could be measured, fixed, and permanently registered; the wealth it produced could be converted into soldiers in the form of personal service of the possessors, or through commutation, or through substitution.

By the tenth century, therefore, the state had come to rely upon the presence in each theme of a number of soldiers, owing service hereditarily, whose ability to fulfill their duties depended upon landed property (and originally, probably, other forms of income). Where families were too poor to bear this burden, their communities covered their state fiscal taxes and contributed to the costs of their equipment, at least in theory (although, as we have seen, there are several examples where this system appears not to have worked very efficiently). It was anyway the responsibility of the local *strategos* and his subordinates to select, from the total of those registered, those who were actually capable of carrying out their duties. Those families bearing military obligations—registered as *stratitotikoi oikoi*, to use a term which first appears in the tenth century—who did not or could not provide a soldier, or who were not asked by the administration to do so, paid instead a certain sum, the proceeds from which were used by the local military establishment or the central *logothesion* to pay for other, less well-equipped soldiers registered on the military codices in the same fiscal districts, or for their equipment (the *syndotai* of the legal texts), or for the raising of mercenary troops.<sup>72</sup>

The system of military lands thus evolved in a haphazard manner, although I would guess that its value was soon perceived by state officials (certainly by the time of Nicephorus I, whose legislation in this respect, in spite of the hostility of Theophanes' report, was clearly intended to assist the poorer registered soldiers), so that the state exploited the potential of this option when it could. But we must remember that there existed side by side with these soldiers also full-time, mercenary, or professional soldiers who made up the core of each provincial division, as well as those recruited for the duration of a campaign. And we must remember, too, that the actual potential of a *thema* was much larger than the number actually (or usually) called up for particular campaigns—the evidence of late ninth- and tenth-century military treatises makes this clear.<sup>73</sup>

During the tenth century, as the lands of the middling and poorer peasants from whom the bulk of these provincial soldiers were drawn came increasingly under threat from the power of provincial magnates and holders of imperial and ecclesiastical titles, offices, and privileges ("the powerful"), and especially as a result of the great famine of

R. Morris, "The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality," *Past and Present* 73 (Nov., 1976), 3–27.

<sup>72</sup>See Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 49f, 60, note 10. Ahrweiler, "Recherches," 14; Dagron-Mihăescu, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 267. For the term *stratitotikos oikos* (in opposition to *politikos oikos*, used of households not registered as having military obligations) see Ahrweiler, "Recherches," 12ff; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 133ff.

<sup>73</sup>See esp. Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber*, 316ff (cited note 14 above); Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 79–80 and notes; G. Dagron, in Dagron-Mihăescu, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 262; and G. Dagron, "Byzance et le modèle islamique au X<sup>e</sup> siècle: À propos des constitutions tactiques de l'empereur Léon VI," *CRAI* (1983), 219–42, see 234 and note 69.



the year 927–928, the state had to intervene to protect the holdings which were the basis for military service. Hence the legislation of the Macedonian emperors. It is worth pointing out that here it is not a question of badly directed or corrupt fiscal policies on the state's part in the pre-Macedonian period which led to this situation, although this may have played a role.<sup>74</sup> We should not forget that just as the military lands represented a relatively long-term development, so the rise and growth of an aristocracy—a magnate class which combined both provincial landowning and imperial office- and title-holding with a near monopoly on key state positions in both the military and civil administration of the empire—was also a relatively long-term evolution. Beginning in the later seventh century with what I call the pseudomeritocracy of that period, this state class or elite gradually establishes itself as a distinct social group which, by the tenth century, is in a position to challenge the interests of the state—interests which it had itself to represent to a certain extent, thus embodying a fundamental contradiction within the state structure—and endanger the lands from which the state both drew its income and supported its soldiers in the provinces.<sup>75</sup>

## VI. THE MILITARY LANDS AND THE STRATEIA FROM THE TENTH CENTURY

The exact details of the workings of the system of military lands in the tenth century has been the subject of several recent contributions. Arguably the most useful has been that of Górecki, who has tried to refine out of the contemporary legislation a more exact description of the relationship between state, fiscal community, and military holdings. Most importantly, her findings have confirmed the crucial development of the early tenth century, namely the formal recognition in legal texts that military obligations had clearly begun to be associated with the land which actually supported the *strateia* rather than with the individuals (families) to whom it was attached and who bore the hereditary burden of this state duty. In particular, she has stressed the fact that a parallel existed between the state's treatment of ordinary fiscal land registered within the rural community (as understood in the fiscal sense), on the one hand, and “military” or “stratiotic”

<sup>74</sup>See, for example, D. Górecki, “The Strateia of Constantine VII: The Legal Status, Administration, and Historical Background,” *BZ* 82 (1989), 157–76, at 171. While it is clear that the policies followed by Leo VI favored the state elite, there is no reason to suppose that such policies were anything more than an effort by the emperor to prevent abuses of traditional rights and ordinances in respect of preemption and the freedom to purchase and transmit land, a point already made by Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 90–91.

<sup>75</sup>See my comments in *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 153ff, 387–95; A. Kazhdan, “Ob aristokratizacii vizantijskogo obščestva VIII–XII vekov,” *ZRVI* 11 (1968), 47–53; and see F. Winkermann, *Quellenstudien zur herrschenden Klasse von Byzanz im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (= BBA 54) (Berlin, 1987), esp. 143–219. It is important to bear in mind the sources of wealth of the middle Byzantine social-economic elite. Certainly, those families closely connected with the provinces and with the military administration appear to have possessed considerable landed wealth. See J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)* (= Byzantina Sorbonensia 9) (Paris, 1990), 207–37; Hendy, *Studies*, 85–90, 100–107. Equally, however—and certainly in the 11th and 12th centuries—many individuals and families belonging to this elite possessed relatively modest lands, investing instead in titles, offices, and the *rhogai* and other rewards attached, which in turn purchased both a clientele as well as movable wealth in the form of cash, bullion, plate, jewelry, precious cloths, books, and so on. See in particular A. Kazhdan, *Social'nyj sostav gosподstvujuščego klassa v Vizantii XI–XII vv.* (Moscow, 1974), 26ff. For all, a degree of dependence upon the ruler of the moment and the imperial administrative-bureaucratic apparatus, with its system of titles and cash pensions, was an essential element in both their rise to, maintenance, and reproduction of positions of power, influence, and authority.

land on the other.<sup>76</sup> The inalienability of stratiotic land and the urgency of the emperors' efforts to protect such property from encroachment are clear results of her analysis. She has also stressed the dynamic nature of the evolution of this institution, which during the tenth century became the focus for a great deal of state legislation.<sup>77</sup>

Górecki's conclusions, which in their general import concur with those of Lemerle and myself, can be summarized as follows:

(1) it was under Constantine VII that the *strateia*, a term denoting both the subject of the rights and duties attached to the possession of "military land" and, therefore, to the conditions of tenure of such land, was institutionalized and enshrined in imperial legislation. This is a point which is, in itself, well known;

(2) the military land was an object of "specific rights and duties"; it was exempted from commercial traffic and its legal status was irreversible;

(3) the state could attribute military status to any piece of land at the request of its owner; it could also allot unoccupied military land already so registered to a nonmilitary household (partial *strateia*), regardless of whether the head of the household or a family member was enlisted as a soldier. By this means smaller properties could jointly provide the income to maintain an active soldier;

(4) the term *adoreia* refers not simply to an exemption from military obligations of an impoverished *stratiotes* (who can thus no longer support the attached service) and his transferral to garrison service, as traditionally thought, but in addition to the consequent attribution of his holding by the state (when the sequence of persons of stratiotic status liable for the fiscal dues of the property in question failed to provide a suitable tenant) to a *nonstratiotic* peasant. The purpose was first to ensure the continued (fiscal) productivity of the property in question, and second to ensure the continued contribution of such properties, as partial *strateiai*, to the maintenance of a soldier. It would, in addition, have as an effect the extension of military obligations (as opposed to active military service) to nonmilitary subjects of the state. The *adoreia*, therefore, functioned in a way similar to the regulation known as *sympatheia*, by which civilian landholders within a fiscal community who had fallen on hard times had their properties temporarily relieved of fiscal burdens until the owner could restore them to good order (a maxi-

<sup>76</sup>Górecki, "The Strateia of Constantine VII," 159, 163–71. Note that the term *strateia* has a number of overlapping, but different, technical meanings. In addition to meaning imperial or state service in general (*militia*), it could refer also to simple military service, and—with a more technical significance—the institution of *strateia* as employed in the present discussion, referring to a specific relationship between the state, a soldier, and the land from which the income to support his military obligations was derived.

<sup>77</sup>I would only challenge Górecki's interpretation in one respect, namely, her misrepresentation of my argument in *Recruitment and Conscription* regarding the shift from a personal and hereditary to both a personal and a land-associated *strateia*, to suggest that the shift occurred ca. 950 ("The Strateia of Constantine VII," 164). To the contrary, I stressed (a) the fact that the change was only partially recognized in the legal texts of the mid-10th century, and was probably only necessitated across a period stretching from the later 9th century to the time of Constantine VII; and (b) that the administration and functioning of the system of recruitment based on military lands was therefore *dynamic* and *evolving* (e.g., *Recruitment and Conscription*, 48ff, 62ff). There is no problem here in recognizing what Górecki rightly calls "a diversity of the various simultaneously occurring phases . . . of the evolution of the *strateia*" (loc. cit.). But I would take issue with her statement that "all possible forms of the *strateia*" could exist both before and after 950 (her date), if by this is meant, say, the early 9th or later 8th century. Only for the later 9th and 10th century do we possess enough evidence to say that, as a result of a changing economic and social context, the evolution of the *strateia* promoted such a variety of parallel forms.

mum period of thirty years was usually granted). After this time, such a property was normally declared a *klasma* and was detached from the fiscal community and attributed to a new owner or holder by the state. In the case of military holdings, as Górecki points out, the second stage—that of the *klasma*—did not apply; instead, the state attempted first to maintain the holder of the *strateia* through the appointment of contributors (*syndotai*); if this did not work, then the military version of the *sympatheia* was invoked, and the land in question was placed in *adoreia*, by which it was granted to another. The state could attribute it to one of a number of persons, according to a list of priorities outlined in the novel in question (beginning with the holder's heirs, proceeding through impoverished *stratiotai* of the same fiscal district, and ending with impoverished civilian taxpayers of the same fiscal unit), in order that its productive capacity be maintained, both in respect of the normal state taxes and the obligation to support a *strateia*. Crucially important is the fact that the person attributed with the “adorned” holding(s), if they were not already registered as such, now received the status of a registered *stratiotes*, with both the fiscal burdens and the privileges (*pronomia*) which accompanied it.<sup>78</sup>

To repeat Górecki's full argument here would necessarily involve going through the texts in detail once again, and I shall avoid this. But a number of points can be made which arise from her conclusions. In the first place, the case with regard to *adoreia* is particularly important. It reinforces the impression we have already from other sources that the Byzantine state had by this time substantially amended traditional Roman concepts of private property. The state had the right to confiscate or reattribute private property with or without compensation, depending on the situation, just as it had the right to determine, within the context of the fiscal community, how the rights of preemption were to be exercised. Górecki has noted that land that was so treated was

<sup>78</sup>On *sympatheia* see Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 81. The key texts for the statute of *adoreia* are: (1) Constantine VII's novel of 945–959, “On Soldiers” (Lemerle's novel E), in Zepos, *Jus I*, Coll. 3, Nov. 8 (222–226), see 224 (= F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches 565–1453* [Corpus der griechischen Urkunden des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit, Reihe A, Abt. I] I–IV [Munich–Berlin, 1924–65], no. 673; II, 2nd edition P. Wirth [Munich, 1977]); (2) *De cer.* 695.21ff; (3) a passage in the early 11th-century compendium of legal cases known as the *Peira* (in Zepos, *Jus IV*, 1–260), 143 (cap. 36, 2); (4) a difficult passage in the *Taktika* of Leo VI (20.71) refers to the thematic army under the command of a *strategos*, including “both those who serve in the army, and those who are *tes legomenes exautoreias*,” as being free of all fiscal servitude. Lemerle notes that Ducange had already seen in this term the Latin *exauctoratio*, “discharge/release” (Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 142, note 1), and wonders whether the term might actually reflect a confusion with *adoreia*, in view of the expression used in the *Peira* text, *ta ex adonion*. This is a likely hypothesis, but it has different implications for the two different interpretations of the term *adoreia*. For Lemerle, this would mean that soldiers or tenants temporarily relieved of their usual stratiotic obligations retained military status. But this surely goes without saying, since such persons were usually sent to serve with lightly armed *apelatai* units (on which see Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 135 note 1; Ahrweiler, “Recherches,” 14), and would as a matter of course retain military status. There would be no need to differentiate between the two types of soldier. For Górecki's hypothesis, in contrast, the statement makes more sense, and indeed reinforces her suggestion, so that the passage refers to those previously of civilian status, now given charge of a stratiotic holding, and therefore enjoying also military *pronomia*, along with the soldiers. See Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 119–20, 142 and notes; and contrast with Górecki, “The Strateia of Constantine VII,” 169–71. On the privileges of stratiotic status, see novel E (cited above), 225 (β): the new holder enjoyed the same preferential status as the *stratiotes* proper, and neither he nor the fisc was permitted to sell the land from which the *strateia* was supported. On the statute of *klasma*, see Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 81f, 162f; and esp. N. Oikonomides, “Das Verfalland im 10.-11. Jahrhundert: Verkauf und Besteuerung,” *Fontes Minores* 7 (Frankfurt a. M., 1986), 161–68, where recent literature is also noted.

of an equivalent juridical status to the classical *ager publicus* of the Roman republic and Principate, although she also stresses that no direct connection can have existed—the parallel reflects rather the nature of the problem faced by the tenth-century legislators and the legal and administrative instruments at their disposal. The shift in the ways in which private property was conceptualized in regard to the state and its interests seems to be noticeable only from the later ninth and tenth century, as Kazhdan has pointed out, reinforcing the impression that it was only at this time that the state became aware of the threat to its resource base and the need to intervene in the traditional assumptions of private property law. It is, nevertheless, important to current discussion of the nature of the military lands and the duties attached to possession of a *strateia*, as we shall shortly see.<sup>79</sup>

In the second place, her presentation confirms the fact that, by the middle of the tenth century at the latest, the state had been encouraged by circumstances to view the burdens attached to military status as binding also on the land from which military service was supported as much as on the person of the registered *stratiotes*. By the same token, of course, such lands also enjoyed the privileges traditionally associated with soldiers' property—exemption from all but the standard fiscal burdens (land tax and *kapnikon*). All the texts discussed make this assumption.

In the third place, the clear contrast between *stratiotes*, referring to the person registered as possessing a military holding, and *strateuomenos*, meaning the actual soldier supported by such a holding, or a group of such holdings in the case of partial *strateiai*, is reaffirmed. The two could still be one and the same person: as we have seen, hereditary military service was related to the person, not the land which had come to be recognized as supporting that service. The legislation reflects the fact that the holder of a *strateia* was, in theory at least, still the one who carried out the military service, although force of circumstances had already by the later ninth century allowed for a replacement or representative of the registered *stratiotes* to carry out the actual soldiering—hence the apparent contradictions in the texts, which represent in fact no contradictions, but merely the fluidity and evolving nature of the institution in the tenth century.<sup>80</sup>

It is difficult to say when the possibility of commuting actual military service for a payment was first introduced. An important source in this respect is the Life of Euthymios, who was born in the 820s, and whose biography was written ca. 900. His father was registered as holder of a *strateia*, the obligations attached to which fell to the family. Euthymios' mother could only support these burdens after the death of her husband by registering her son in his stead. The element of personal service here is quite clear.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>79</sup>The discussion on and evidence for this shift in Roman legal principles is presented by G. G. Litavrin, *Vizantijskoe obščestvo i gosudarstvo v X-XI veka* (Moscow, 1977), 23ff, and summarized by A. Kazhdan, "Do We Need a New History of Byzantine Law?" *JÖB* 39 (1989), 1–28, see esp. 14ff; see also Górecki, "The Strateia of Constantine VII," 171ff.

<sup>80</sup>I have presented the evidence for this development in *Recruitment and Conscription*, 41–65. For a good example of the difference, see Zepos, *Jus I*, Coll. III, Nov. 2, 204 (ascribed to Romanus I, but actually from a novel of Nicephorus II—see note 89 below), where it is stated that military land alienated within 30 years from the date of the legislation should be returned without compensation to the original holder, "unless after its alienation enough remains to the *stratiotes*, such as is sufficient for the *strateuomenos* to support the *nean strateian*."

<sup>81</sup>See *Recruitment and Conscription*, 56; also *Vita Lucae Stylitae*, 200.8–9; *Miracula S. Georgii*, ed. J. B. Aufhauser (Leipzig, 1913), 19–21; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 145 and note 1 for other texts.

But the implication of the registration of the young Euthymios is that by so doing the widowed mother would no longer be held liable fiscally to the state for service which was attached to the family, since it could once more be personally acquitted. In the event, it is clear from the Life that Euthymios was never called up, presumably because he was at that stage too young (as we have seen, thematic officers were exhorted to select the soldiers actually called out carefully, according to their ability to support their duties, both economically and in respect of their age and fitness). Other letters of the later ninth and early tenth century confirm both this personal aspect of the *strateia* and the possibility of avoiding being called up on account of youth or old age.<sup>82</sup> Apart from the Life of Euthymios, however, Oikonomides has drawn attention to a passage in a letter of Theodore the Studite in which the writer praises Empress Irene for relieving soldiers' widows of payments demanded by the state in place of their husbands' military service, which the widows themselves could not, of course, provide. It is clear from the Life of Euthymios that this human measure was soon either abrogated or, perhaps more likely, ignored by the provincial officials of the military *logothesion*. Nevertheless, this suggestion takes the commutation element back at least to the later eighth century, and probably even earlier—on the grounds that this exaction is ascribed to rulers before Irene who had been Orthodox, therefore, before Leo III.<sup>83</sup>

Oikonomides understands both the Life of Euthymios and the letter of Theodore, however, as reflecting military service based on the possession of land, of a military holding in the technical sense. But it must be said that there is no mention of this in the texts in question—what is very clear is that the obligation of military service was attached to an individual and his family, and was hereditary—when the father dies, the son has to step in; if there is no son, then the state exacts a payment in lieu of such service, which goes to the fisc for the payment of other soldiers. For the hard-pressed state of the later seventh or eighth century, this would not be an illogical step, even if it meant hardship on such families—the case of Mousoulíos, from the Life of Philaretos, is a case in point, as are those from a later period of Euthymios and the boys mentioned in the letters of Patriarch Nicholas I. I see no reason to assume that this was done on the basis of the possession of lands registered in some way as “military,” even if the state, as we have said, took the existence of an income of some sort for granted. Once again, therefore, I would argue that we take Constantine VII's preamble to his novel “On Soldiers” of 945–959 at face value—the practice of military service based on the possession of land, which was by custom hedged about with various conditions regarding sale and transmission, was only formalized in the tenth century.<sup>84</sup> The implication is that the obligations connected with military service had been extended to include the possession of land not by legislative act, but by long tradition. The conclusion we may draw

<sup>82</sup> See note 64 above, and Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 47f, 56ff. See in particular two letters of the patriarch Nicholas I asking for special exemptions for boys who have been called up (under different circumstances in each case) to fulfill their stratiotic obligations personally, since their families are unable to support the fiscal alternative. See J. Darrouzès, *Épistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle* (= AOC 6) (Paris, 1960), nos. 30 (119–20) (also in *Nicholas I, Patriarch of Constantinople, Letters*, ed. and trans. R. J. H. Jenkins and L. G. Westerink [= CFHB 6] [Washington D.C., 1973], no. 169 [496]); 50 (130–31).

<sup>83</sup> Oikonomides, “Middle Byzantine Provincial Recruits,” 135–36; see notes 61 and 62 above for Theodore's letter.

<sup>84</sup> Zepos, *Jus I*, 222.

is that it was the hereditary aspect which had been the core of the system thus evolved. Only in the tenth century was this modified.

There is one important additional conclusion, however. For if Oikonomides' conclusion regarding the time from which a payment in lieu of military service was demanded by the state—the early eighth century, perhaps before—is correct, then the hereditary nature of military service must go back at least that far, too. It would suggest that even though the reign of Heraclius cannot be proved to be the time at which it was reintroduced for regular soldiers of the *comitatenses*, his reign or that of one of his immediate successors remains the most likely period at which this would have occurred.

I have spent some time on these points because Górecki's conclusions contrast starkly with those of Gregoriou-Ioannidou, who has tried to show that there was no connection between military service and the land in the tenth century; and that the system of military lands develops more or less directly out of the old *limitanei*-type of service. This is clearly an attempt to revive the views of Karayannopoulos, and I believe it largely fails.

In the first place, to claim that there was no connection between land and service in the Macedonian period, a connection which is quite evident in the legal texts of the tenth century and which most scholars now agree existed, seems to me to fly in the face both of the texts themselves and the logic of the situation. Again, Górecki's recent work confirms this and throws more light on how the legal stipulations of the tenth-century texts might be more clearly understood.<sup>85</sup>

Gregoriou-Ioannidou's main line of argument is, quite simply, that the military lands, like other lands, carried merely a fiscal burden, whereas military service remained attached only to individuals. Military status brought with it certain privileges (as we have seen), so that it was not the land occupied by a soldier which brought with it military obligations, but rather the military status of the soldier which brought the status of military land to his property. This has long been recognized, of course, and as far as it goes, is entirely correct.<sup>86</sup> But it ignores the historical nature of the evolution of the *strateia*: the whole point of the debate in the last few years has been to stress how the institution was developing and changing over time in response to the demands of the state and the social context in which it existed. Further, in criticizing those who have argued for a connection between lands and military burdens—the *strateia*—she chooses to define this connection (and to represent others to have so defined it) in an overly narrow way, to mean that military lands bore the obligation of recruitment or military service. It is this, I think, that leads her to argue so strongly for no connection at all between land and service. On the basis of two texts in particular (Constantine VII's novel "On Soldiers" [945–959] and a novel of Nicephorus II Phocas)<sup>87</sup> she rightly points out that persons already enrolled on the military registers who are attributed by the state with parts or the whole of abandoned or otherwise deserted military holdings cannot have been expected to serve twice, once for their own property and once for that which they have newly received. Of course, individuals could not serve as two sol-

<sup>85</sup> See Gregoriou-Ioannidou, *Stratologia* (cited note 69 above).

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 51–52 and note 90; 54, note 94.

<sup>87</sup> Zepos, *Jus* I, 225; and Zepos, *Jus* I, Coll. III, Nov. 18, 247–248 (Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 720); see Gregoriou-Ioannidou, *Stratologia*, 62ff.

diers at the same time. But on the basis of this point she argues that, in consequence, there was no connection between the land and military service, and thereby completely misses the point. For the land itself *never* had the *obligation* of “military service,” or even of furnishing a recruit, and I have certainly never argued this. But what had happened by this time was that the connection between military service and the land which supported the family from which a registered soldier was drawn, whether active or not, had become explicit. Hence the obligation *to provide the resources* with which to equip or provision a soldier was apparent—again, all the texts which refer to soldiers and the basis of their military service take this connection for granted. The *strateia* was perceived as attached to the land as well as to the person registered on the military rolls who held it, for the simple reason that while the individuals inscribed on the military registers actually served, the resources to support this service were drawn from the income derived from agricultural production.

Part of Gregoriou-Ioannidou’s difficulty arises from the fact that she insists that the term *baros*, burden, applied to the state’s rights in respect of land, can mean *only* tax or fiscal burden in the very narrowest sense, not the obligation to provide support for a soldier.<sup>88</sup> But there is in practice little or no difference between the appropriation of resources in the form of cash, labor, or crops, for example, and the appropriation of resources in the form of a particular type of service. That the Roman and Byzantine state (and indeed most medieval states) regarded these different forms as equivalents is clear from any examination of the ways in which the state extracted revenues from its territories and those who carried out the productive labor on them. There seems to me no valid reason for denying the fact that the obligation to support military service was just as much a *baros* on lands defined as “military,” as the public taxes were on all lands within the empire. Individuals carried out the service; land provided the resources, directly or indirectly, to support that service. The *strateia* was hereditarily attached to the person inscribed on the registers, but they could not fulfill their obligations without an income, and this came from the exploitation of the land. It is surely apparent that in the very act of the state stipulating, in a legislative instrument such as the novels of the emperors Constantine VII and Nicephorus II, the amount of inalienable land necessary to support the *strateia*, land itself came to be associated with the *strateia*, and the *strateia* was conceived as associated as much with land as with individuals. This is particularly clear in the final paragraph of the novel of Nicephorus II dealing with the increase from a value of 4 pounds to 12 pounds of gold of the amount of military land henceforth to be regarded as inalienable: military holdings (*stratitika ktemata*) which had been alienated within a period of fewer than thirty years from the date of the legislation were to be returned “to the responsibility and service of their own *strateia*.”<sup>89</sup> It is equally clear in the case of soldiers found guilty of murder. The lands of such a person, which would normally have been awarded in part or whole as compensation to the victim’s family, are at all costs to be kept intact. If there are no relatives willing to undertake the *strateia*, then another, unrelated person should take up the properties or holding in

<sup>88</sup>Gregoriou-Ioannidou, *Stratologia*, 63f.

<sup>89</sup>The main text of the novel: Zepos, *Jus* I, Coll. 3, Nov. 22, 255–256, for the first three paragraphs; the fourth, and last, paragraph seems to be that mistakenly edited as para. 3 in Zepos, *Jus* I, Coll. 3, Nov. 2, 203–204 (Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 595), actually a novel of Romanus I, Constantine and Christopher.

question (*tous topous*) and fulfill the *strateia*.<sup>90</sup> In other words, the connection between the original holder of the land and his family, responsible for the *strateia*, is severed, and the land is handed over to someone who can fulfill the relevant obligations. But these obligations can then only be seen as related to the land itself, a point emphasized by Lemerle's commentary.<sup>91</sup> Gregoriou-Ioannidou argues here that this is an exceptional case,<sup>92</sup> thus neatly sidestepping a problematic text. In fact, if the land had no military service attached, there is no reason why it could not have been given in compensation. The point is, once again, that while people provided soldiers, it was land that supported them. And this is made even clearer in a case reported in the *Peira* of the judge Eustathios, in which a *kourator* is found guilty, along with an unspecified number of co-defendants, of attacking, injuring, and robbing a tax collector. Note that this is *not* a case of murder. As compensation to the injured party, all his property, except that which is subject to a *strateia* (and the dowry brought by his wife), was to be confiscated and awarded as compensation to the tax collector. Should the property in question be insufficient to compensate for the loss to both the tax collector and the state (in respect of stolen and unrecovered revenue), then the property of the co-defendants was to be similarly treated.<sup>93</sup> It is assumed that the normal regulations for the transfer of the land or property subject to the *strateia* would then have been implemented, which meant that, in the case of there being no relatives, it would be placed in the hands of an unrelated party. It seems again fairly clear that while the principle of hereditary obligations attached to a registered household was respected, the obligations—the revenues to support the obligations which came with the *strateia*—were seen as connected with the land. It was inevitable that the state should, according to the situation and circumstances reflected in different items of imperial legislation, regard military service as connected with both. We should recall here that imperial legislation was *functional*—different items placed the emphasis differently, on either the soldiers or their land—according to the particular problem under discussion, both within the same document and across different documents.

It was thus perfectly possible for a registered *stratiotes*—any person registered as the holder of a *strateia* (whether he served actively or not)—to be in possession of two “military” holdings, since each could provide such resources. There is no need to argue that one person could not serve in a double capacity here.<sup>94</sup> And presumably the state, in

<sup>90</sup>See Zepos, *Jus* I, 248/3.

<sup>91</sup>*Agrarian History*, 128; see also Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 59 and note 2.

<sup>92</sup>Gregoriou-Ioannidou, *Stratologia*, 79f.

<sup>93</sup>See *Peira* 66.26 (249–50). The key phrase is τὴν ἅπασαν αὐτοῦ περιουσίαν μὴ ὑποκειμένην στρατείᾳ. . . . Two other cases in the same section illustrate the point. In the first (*Peira* 66.24 [249]), a man and some associates kill a *skeptrophoros* (also a soldier, a standard-bearer). The decision reached after the murderer's property had been assessed (along with that of his co-defendants) was that the said property should be divided up in compensation, with the exception of the *strateiai*, and of course the dowry and other property connected with the marriage transaction. In the next case (66.25 [249]), a *magklabites* is found guilty of murder, and again his property, with the exception of the *strateia* and the property connected with the marital arrangement, was to be awarded in compensation. It is especially interesting that in the last two examples a portion of the property itself is referred to simply as “the *strateia*”—surely a clear indication of the connection being made between the obligations which that term implies and the land which supported them.

<sup>94</sup>The point is reinforced when we recall that, although some holders of higher or more privileged imperial offices at Constantinople were exempted from fulfilling the obligations accompanying any *strateia*



allotting such lands to registered persons, was both ensuring that labor was available to maintain them in production, and increasing the possibility for the poorer peasants to improve their own productive capacity, all to the state's advantage—this is the main purpose of much of the legislation. As I have argued, *both* personal hereditary service attached to individuals, *and* the association of that service more closely with the properties from which it was supported, are represented in the legislative texts. It is surely obvious that the requirement to serve as a soldier was in effect a type of fiscal obligation: the fact that the families of deceased soldiers were still liable for the expenses of military service, or a proportion thereof, at least from the reign of Irene and, as Oikonomides has plausibly suggested, even earlier, when no individual could be produced to carry out the service in question, suggests as much. That the *strateia* was so easily transformed into a purely fiscal burden from the later tenth century onward bears this out. Indeed, had the *strateia* remained only and always a personal burden attached to individuals, as it was originally, it is difficult to see how it could ever have been generalized as a fiscal imposition, as it was in the eleventh century. More telling still is the fact that lands subject to the fiscalized *strateia* were still exempt from extraordinary state levies, even though they were no longer held by active soldiers or their families, to whom the standard immunities and privileges continued to be attached. In other words, it is the special status of the land which is here significant.<sup>95</sup>

This brings us to a further argument made against the notion that the state came to view land during the tenth century as connected with military obligations. It has been suggested that all the examples of soldiers or groups of soldiers avoiding military service by making a payment to the state instead represent in effect the same phenomenon, that is to say, that there always existed a “fiscalized” *strateia*. According to this position, individual obligations to serve in the army could always be met by a payment to the state. The examples of such a practice from the ninth and tenth centuries, in particular the well-known case of the soldiers from the *thema* of the Peloponnese,<sup>96</sup> are equated with the later full fiscalization of the *strateia* which can be observed in the eleventh century, and it is alleged that there is no difference between the two practices—merely that, in the eleventh century, because the state preferred cash, for a variety of reasons, it tended toward the greater exploitation of this option.

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attached to their household (*oikos*), others were not: even though they actively occupied posts geographically distant from their properties, their *strateia* still had to be fulfilled when there was a general call up (*teronaton*). It is clear from this passage alone, as Lemerle pointed out long ago, that the *strateia* can here only have meant the provision of money, provisions, or other necessities of warfare, not simply active military service. For the text, see *De cer.*, 697.18–698.22; and discussion by Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 136ff; Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 59. So much is clear also from two of the cases referred to already from the *Peira* (66.25 and 26), since the two chief accused persons in the cases in question, while clearly subject to a *strateia*, occupy at the same time other positions—one is a *magklabites*, and hence attendant upon the imperial court; the other a *kourator* (although it is unclear whether lay or ecclesiastical) and, from the context, in charge of a property or group of properties in the provinces.

<sup>95</sup> For examples of the *strateia* as a purely fiscal obligation, see Zepos, *Jus I*, 617.5–7 (a.1044); *Actes de Lavra*, I: *des origines à 1204*, ed. P. Lemerle, N. Svoronos, A. Guillou, D. Papachryssanthou (= Archives de l'Athos 5) (Paris, 1970), no. 56.91–93 (a.1104); *Actes de Dionysiou* (= Archives de l'Athos 4) (Paris, 1968), no. 1 (mid-11th cent.); M. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, *Byzantina Eggrapha tes Mones Patmou II: Demosion Leitourgon* (Athens, 1980), no. 54. I shall be dealing with the decline of the *strateia* in a future study.

<sup>96</sup> See *De administrando imperio*, cap. 52 (p. 256), together with the last section of cap. 51, and Lemerle's commentary, *Agrarian History*, 131ff.

It seems to me once again that this both oversimplifies the problem and obfuscates the issue. Two developments need to be distinguished. In the first place, that of the *strateia* and its particular evolution as an institution over the period from the seventh century onward; in the second place, that of the demands of the state for cash or manpower according to constantly changing circumstances. As we have seen, it seems from perhaps as early as the beginning of the eighth or the later seventh century to have been a principle that, where a soldier could not be provided from a registered household at the time of the general muster, that household could be liable to a payment in lieu of military service. In this respect, there is certainly a fiscal aspect to military service which, as we have said already, is in the end no more than one form of the extraction by the state from the producers of surplus wealth. The evidence nevertheless points to the state's preference, at least until the later ninth or early tenth century, for the fulfillment of personal service from those so registered. The examples referred to in the *De administrando imperio*, however, suggest that the state was by this time prepared to broaden and to generalize this procedure to the army of a whole theme, demanding instead either materials (e.g., horses and their harness) or cash. But in both these examples from very different periods it is not in doubt that those thus treated by the state were also holders of *strateiai*, whether they were personally exempt by reason of their particular title or office or not. The state is applying a particular solution to a particular problem it may have faced (about which we can only guess) at a particular moment. This is in stark contrast to the generalized imposition on all classes of the population, including the Church and monastic foundations, for particular military undertakings of demands for cash and materials, a potential which the state seems always to have exercised when it needed to do so. Such impositions were not, of course, regular in the sense that yearly taxes were. On the other hand, the frequency of military campaigns must have affected their incidence, hence the complaints of the population under Nicephorus II, if the reports of Leo the Deacon and, later, of Zonaras, for example, can be trusted. In addition, there is an increasing tendency toward the general fiscalization of the *strateia*, particularly marked from the reign of Nicephorus II.<sup>97</sup> Thus we are

<sup>97</sup> Wealthy lay and secular persons were often obliged to make contributions in this way. See, for example, *Nicholas I, Letters*, nos. 92. 10–26; 94. 31–40 (in which the patriarch supports the state's extraordinary impositions in view of the Bulgarian war); 150; 183 (in which he opposes the imposition of military burdens upon individual clerics, in the first case, and the renewed general imposition of extraordinary levies on Church lands); *De adm. imp.*, cap. 52, which lists the metropolitans of Patras and Corinth as well as the bishops of the Peloponnese among those who must furnish horses and equipment for the army; Haldon, ed., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises*, (C) 103–112, for horses and mules with pack-saddles to be contributed by metropolitans and bishops throughout the empire to imperial expeditionary forces (a text which probably dates from the time of Basil I); and the reference in the novel of 934 of Romanus I to the contribution made by the whole population to the support of the needs of the armies (Zepos, *Jus I*, Coll. 3, Nov. 5, 205–214 [Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 628], 209). Note the advice of Leo VI in his *Taktika* that the theme *strategos* should require the wealthier in his district to provide mounts and equipment or resources for a soldier, thus arming poor but registered *stratiotai* through wealthy, unregistered persons. See Leo, *Takt.*, 18.129; 20.205. For the application of such measures under Nicephorus II especially, see Zonaras (*Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum libri XIII usque ad XVIII*, Bonn ed. [1897]), III, 504.12–16; Cedrenus (*Compendium historiarum*, Bonn ed. [1838–39]), II, 368.7–10; and in particular the passage from the Arab geographer Ibn Hawkal (*La configuration de la terre [Kitab Surat al-Ard]*), trans. J. H. Kramers, E. Wiet (Beirut-Paris, 1964), 194; with the discussions of Ahrweiler, “Recherches,” 20–21; Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 61f; Dagron-Mihăescu, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 278ff. For the generalized fiscalization of the *strateia*, see Zonaras, III, 505.16–506.10, and below.

confronted with two quite different institutions or administrative practices, practices which, as the state's needs evolved, and as the context within which those practices were carried changed, converged to produce a third and, in its turn, quite different institutional procedure.

The point is that the state was becoming more concerned with the sources from which the revenue and provisions for soldiers were drawn by the middle and later tenth century than with the sources of manpower as such, as I believe the texts discussed by Lemerle, Lilie, Górecki, and myself make abundantly clear.<sup>98</sup> This does not mean that individuals and their families did not continue to bear a military obligation, where they were registered, as well,<sup>99</sup> merely that the state's focus of attention shifted as circumstances and necessity demanded. No amount of semantic prestidigitation alters this. For it is surely absurd to argue that the extensive legislation of tenth-century emperors on the question of soldiers and their lands was intended to protect the basis of their military service by formalizing a specific type of tenure (as demonstrated once again by Górecki) subject to a whole range of complex provisions designed to protect its integrity, while at the same time suggesting that such prescriptions were of a simple fiscal nature only, and had absolutely no effect on the juridical statute and burdens attached to the tenant of the property and, thereby, to the property itself. Fiscal burdens were clearly associated with the possession of land, as much as, and as well as, with individuals. Fiscal burdens intended to provide or support soldiers or their service were no different. But by formally defining the nature of the rights and duties attached to the *strateia*, the state also formalized the nature of the fiscal burdens which accompanied the tenure of land which supported this particular type of state service, and thereby made the relationship between land and service more obvious. The fact that nonmilitary persons, not previously registered on the military rolls, received military status when they were attributed by the state with military land makes this clear; just as does the fact that persons previously registered as owing "service" to the *dromos* were transferred to naval or marine "service" by the changes introduced under Nicephorus II.<sup>100</sup> Górecki's observations on the nature of the *adoreia* in this respect, and those of Lemerle and myself on the nature of partial *strateia*, would appear to bear this out. In sum, the argument against a connection between land and military service elaborated by Gregoriou-Ioannidou seems to

<sup>98</sup>The connection between the *strateia*, military service based thereon, and land is made abundantly clear in a Chrysobull of Constantine IX Monomachus dated to 1044: fiscal exemption is granted to a number of "untaxed" peasants, defined as "those who possess no land of their own," "subject neither to the fisc nor to the *strateia* nor to the public post nor burdened with another fiscal service" (Zepos, *Jus* I, 617; K. N. Kanelakis, *Chiaka Analekta* [Athens, 1890], 547). There can be no doubt, as Ahrweiler already remarked long ago ("Recherches," 22), that the *strateia* in this text was understood as bound up indissolubly with the possession of land. The terminology is remarkably similar to that of the mid-10th century: see the Chrysobull of Constantine VII, summarized in a similar document of Constantine X in favor of the Lavra, dated 1060, in which possession of a *strateia* clearly depends on land. See *Actes de Lavra*, I (ed. P. Lemerle, N. Svoronos, A. Guillou, D. Papachryssanthou [Paris, 1970]), no. 33, 30ff; and the mention in a document of 927, in *Actes d'Iviron*, I (eds. J. Lefort, N. Oikonomidès, D. Papachryssanthou [Paris, 1985]), no. 1.8–9, of military obligations (*strateiai*) owed by certain persons "for the land" which they had leased. See the editors' comments, p. 107. The point about such texts is that land was clearly understood to support the *strateia*, and contemporaries cannot have avoided relating the two in their efforts to legislate on matters concerning them.

<sup>99</sup>A point made quite clearly at *Recruitment and Conscription*, 49f.

<sup>100</sup>Zonaras, III, 506.3–5.

me to be founded on an artificial distinction between different types of state service and obligation, and a failure to recognize the dynamic nature of the developments of the later ninth and tenth centuries.

In the second place, it is now increasingly recognized that the *limitanei* in the East were more or less phased out or withdrawn by the mid-sixth and early seventh century as the East Roman state came to rely more and more on “federate”-style troops, especially in eastern frontier provinces, as the recent work of Glen Bowersock and Benjamin Isaac has demonstrated. More significantly, while there may in view of the limited systemic and logistical possibilities open to late Roman and early Byzantine administrations have evolved some apparent similarities between the older *limitanei* and the later thematic soldiers and their lands, this is based more on appearance than reality—it is also increasingly clear that the *limitanei* were by no means soldiers given lands or plots by the state as a deliberate policy, except perhaps under Justinian in Africa; rather, they were soldiers who, having once acquired lands, by whatever means, were able to obtain especial exemptions from the payment of regular state taxes. It is worth stressing this: the later Byzantine “military lands” were freed from some extraordinary state impositions, chiefly because in origin they were lands held or owned by soldiers, who received immunity from certain state demands. But they were not freed from the land and hearth taxes, no more than late Roman soldiers had been freed from regular state taxes. The lands of *limitanei*, in contrast, were exempt from such regular burdens. The point has been made before by Patlagean. It surely follows that were the *stratiotika ktemata* derived from the lands of *limitanei*, this privilege would also have remained attached to them.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Here the reader is referred to the detailed arguments of G. W. Bowersock, “Limes Arabicus,” *HSCP* 80 (1976), 219–29; B. Isaac, “The Meaning of the Terms *Limes* and *Limitanei*,” *JRS* 78 (1988), 125–47, esp. 139ff; idem, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1990). Justinian, in reconstituting the African prefecture, seems to have allowed for the establishment of soldiers, described as *limitanei*, with lands, which they were henceforth to till, as a means of encouraging the resettlement of deserted regions subject to Moorish raids. Cf. *CI* I, 27.2, and Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 663. Soldiers belonging to *limitanei* units were originally exempted from poll tax for themselves and, depending on the nature of their service, certain members of their immediate families (*CTh* VII, 20.4 pr./3 [a.325]; 13.6 pr; 13.7/3 [375]). Their lands were also exempt from regular as well as extraordinary taxes. See Theodosius II, Nov. 24, 1.4 (a. 443), repeated in *CI* XI, 60.3, with the comment of E. Patlagean, “L’impôt payé par les soldats au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Armées et fiscalité dans le monde antique* (cited note 1 above), 303–4 (and on the operation of the taxes on persons and livestock—*capitatio*—and on land—*iugatio*—see A. H. M. Jones, “*Capitatio* and *Iugatio*,” *JRS* 47 [1957], 88–94, repr. in idem, *The Roman Economy*, ed. P. A. Brunt [Oxford, 1974], 280–92, see 285ff; idem, *Later Roman Empire*, 64ff). Gregoriou-Ioannidou’s arguments here drastically misrepresent those of other scholars who have discussed this question, including those of both Lilie and myself: see, for example, *Stratologia*, 47, where we are accused of “denying the strong continuity” in the existence of soldiers’ private property from the early Byzantine period and onward. This is quite incorrect—see, for example, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 74. Of course soldiers had private property, both in land and other forms of wealth, a point which has been widely recognized and generally accepted for many years (cf., for example, Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 648 and note 93; 649ff); what we do in fact say is that soldiers did not have property (in Anatolia) closely associated institutionally with the fact of their military service before the 7th century. There were before this time, and no doubt there continued to be afterward, soldiers in the armies of the *magistri militum* who had been based in the same area for many years and thereby acquired possessions, land, or family connections. A. H. M. Jones’ work amply demonstrates this point for Egypt, T. S. Brown’s for Italy. There is plenty of epigraphic and legislative evidence to support this, and all scholars appear to accept the fact. Much of Gregoriou-Ioannidou’s presentation on this problem is, therefore, superfluous. Her conclusion (53), while purporting to disagree completely with others, mostly repeats their conclusions: “Thus there are no beginnings to the *stratiotika ktemata*, since soldiers had always disposed of

Work on the tenth-century legislation and its importance for an understanding of the military lands, on the one hand, and of the state's fiscal-administrative structures, on the other, is continuing and will no doubt bring new insights in the near future. In spite of some recent objections, however, I would argue that we have now reached a reasonable degree of agreement on the process by which the military lands came into being over the period from the seventh to the tenth century. More importantly, we can see more clearly the process by which a traditionally informal but significant element in the state's arrangements for the recruitment and the maintenance of soldiers became increasingly a focal point of imperial fiscal-political attention, to be transformed during the tenth century into a carefully regulated and formal "system." In this respect, it would be fair to suggest that what has traditionally been called the "theme system" was, in fact, a product of the tenth rather than the seventh century. For I can still find no evidence for a Heraclian creation of a "thematic system" involving both the granting of land to soldiers and the restructuring of the field forces. On the contrary, all the evidence seems to point to a whole series of developments, some planned by the state, some not, some certainly occurring during Heraclius' reign, while others clearly did not, which combined as they evolved over two centuries to produce what we find reflected in the tenth-century sources.

## VII. THE ARMY IN SOCIETY

I will stop at this point and turn now to look at the implications of these debates for our understanding of the role and status of the military in the Byzantine world. I will do this by examining briefly the key elements in the relationship between the state and its armies from the sixth to the twelfth centuries, and by putting these in the context of the evolution of Byzantine society as a whole over this period. This will necessarily be a

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private property." This misses the point. But in then pointing out that the term *limitanei* means, literally, soldiers who protect, or who are stationed in, frontier regions (however broadly or narrowly we define them—see Isaac, "The Meaning of the Terms *Limes* and *Limitanei*," 136–38, 146), she makes the assertion that since there were always such soldiers, *limitanei* always existed and were the same, whether they are identified with the later Roman soldiers or the forces of the middle Byzantine *kleisourai*. On the same grounds, she argues that, in consequence, the fiscally exempted property of the *limitanei* continued to exist after the 6th century, too (40, 51, 52). In effect, she deprives the late Roman term of the institutional specificity it had acquired by the middle of the 6th century. For however much we may agree with Isaac that the term *limes* meant at this time simply provinces behind the frontier or, in the case of the East, the eastern desert itself, *limitanei* did have a particular and recognized status, expressed both in their duties, posts, and legal privileges, which differentiated them from soldiers not so designated. In this respect, I would take issue with Isaac's overgeneralized definition of *limitanei* as "simply soldiers serving anywhere in the area assigned to the relevant *dux*" (art. cit., 146). This may be true of the period up to the middle of the 5th century, but the particularly privileged position of the lands or allotments of *limitanei* must surely indicate also a differentiation in juridical situation. We have already seen that the legal status of the lands of *limitanei* was *not* the same as that of the later thematic soldiers. See Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 74–75, 77–79; Lilie, "Die zweihundertjährige Reform," (i) 198; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 216f (following Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 679); Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*, 104ff. There are, unfortunately, many other misrepresentations or complete misunderstandings of the conclusions and arguments of others, including Lemerle (who at *Stratologia*, 32 note 6, is taken out of context and made to say that the state established the military lands in the first place by granting holdings to soldiers. In fact, Lemerle's statement refers to the situation in the middle and later 10th century, and in respect of the particular point he is making, is perfectly correct).

partial account, related to the specific themes I have taken up so far—there are, of course, a whole range of important “historical sociological” issues which also need to be addressed, which I cannot go into here.

The first point I would emphasize is that there is a clear shift in the political role of the army and of soldiers from the sixth to the eleventh century. The relationship between soldiers and the state in the late Roman period—that is to say, up to the reign of Heraclius, approximately—can be characterized as fairly direct, by which I mean that the intermediaries between these two elements were relatively few, and were on the whole themselves part of the state’s apparatus, whether civil or military. This direct relationship can be summed up in a number of points.

To begin with, the state retained, in theory if not always in practice, a strict control over the production and issue of weapons which, whether issued directly to the soldiers, or sold to them, were a state monopoly and passed from state hands to those of the soldiers via specifically laid out and approved routes, which are described in detail in the legislation of Justinian.<sup>102</sup> All the evidence we have for the period before the Islamic conquests suggests that the system did not change in this period. Furthermore, the state directly supervised the provisioning of the field armies, whether permanently settled in a specific garrison town or whether on campaign, through imperial officials specifically appointed to such tasks. This feature is tied into the fact that the state paid and rewarded its soldiers directly, through cash salaries (commuted *annonae* and *capitus*), quinquennial and accessional *donativa*, and field or campaign awards.<sup>103</sup>

Throughout the period with which we are concerned soldiers had a specific legal status, inscribed in Roman-Byzantine law and inherited ultimately from the position of soldiers in the armies of the late Republic, modified and altered during the first century and a half of the Principate. As we have seen, a central element in this was the existence of a specific military *peculium*, which until the modifications which appear to have been introduced during the eighth century meant the right of disposal of property gained through their state service or through inheritance freely, without reference to the *lex Falcidia*, according to which property had to be apportioned among specific groups of relatives before its dispersal elsewhere.<sup>104</sup>

All this meant that, whatever the practical and logistical difficulties which diluted the effectiveness of this direct relationship, soldiers were independent of other social

<sup>102</sup> Justinian, *Nov.* 85, 1; *Edict.* 8, 3; and Maurice, *Strategikon*, I, 2.11; XII, 8.6; 7. See Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 670f; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 114.

<sup>103</sup> For the administrative structures which supported the army in the 6th and early 7th centuries, see in general Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 671–74 (with 623ff as background); Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 113ff; idem, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 221f; Kaegi, “Two Studies,” 103ff.

<sup>104</sup> For the privileges attached to military service, see Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 617, 675; Mommsen, *Militärwesen*, 248f; Patlagean, “L’impôt payé par les soldats,” 303–9; for the relevant texts, see esp. *CI* XII, 30; 35.16 (with the reference to unspecified military privileges); 36; and A. Dain, “Sur le ‘peculium castrense’,” *REB* 19 (1961), 253–57 and esp. *Dig* 50, 5.10 (= *Bas.* 54, 5.10) on exemption for soldiers from certain *munera* or *aggareiai*, including that of billeting; and *Dig* 50, 4.3. Whether soldiers remained free from *capitatio* in the later Roman period (they were clearly not freed from paying the later *kapnikon*) remains unclear—see Jones, *Later Roman Empire* 617 and 675. For the Roman period proper, in which these privileges are rooted, see J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army* (Oxford, 1984), 210–29 (on testamentary privileges), 229–36 (on *peculium castrense*); P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1970), 245ff; MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian* (cited note 1 above), 107ff; and E. Sander, “Das Recht des römischen Soldaten,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 101 (1958), 152–234.

loyalties for the most part, serving the state in a more or less unmediated way in a purely military hierarchy of power. In the context of the sixth century or the later fifth century, soldiers' rebellions against authority were almost entirely connected with conditions of service—late pay, bad supplies, inadequate compensation for hardship, overzealous officers, and so on. Virtually none of the military unrest which can be located at this time can be connected with any sort of “political/ideological” consciousness or desire actively to intervene in imperial or provincial politics in order to effect some sort of change. Whether soldiers were led and exploited by their officers, or whether they acted on their own initiative (there are many examples of the latter), their grievances were on the whole not connected to any ideological context, but rather with their economic situation and their conditions of service and remuneration.<sup>105</sup> In this period, still, “politics” remained a predominantly metropolitan or urban phenomenon, in which soldiers were only marginally implicated as an independent element, if at all.<sup>106</sup>

Of course, there were groups of soldiers, notably private or state-supported *bucellarii*, who do not fit into this pattern, especially in the second half of the sixth century when, as evidence from Egyptian papyri suggests, the state actively encouraged members of the senatorial landed elite to hire private soldiers in order to maintain local peace and security, especially—as we might predict—where the collection of revenues was concerned. In return, the landlords received certain state benefits, and the soldiers themselves received official recognition as soldiers of the imperial forces, not merely hirelings.<sup>107</sup>

But on the whole and in spite of the manifest inefficiencies of state control, state

<sup>105</sup> These conclusions are clearly supported by Kaegi's analysis of military unrest in the 5th and 6th centuries (*Byzantine Military Unrest*, 14ff), who shows in particular that it was a combination of maladministration, irregular pay, poor conditions of service, and bad treatment at the hands of corrupt, arrogant, or incompetent officers which stimulated unrest and mutiny. See esp. *ibid.*, 64–153. For the 6th-century situation, see also Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 677f, 1035–37; and see my comments in “Ideology and Social Change in the Seventh Century: Military Discontent as a Barometer,” *Klio* 68 (1986), 139–90, at 141f.

This is not to say, of course, that soldiers were not “constitutionally” inscribed in the formal structures of the expression of imperial power—their “traditional” role in respect of imperial accessions, along with the senate and people, was generally recognized: see the remarks of H.-G. Beck, “Senat und Volk von Konstantinopel: Probleme der byzantinischen Verfassungsgeschichte,” *SBMünchen* (1966), Heft 6, 1–75, repr. in *idem*, *Ideen und Realitäten in Byzanz* (London, 1972), XII, 4–12; and O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell* (Jena, 1938), 251; in general, see W. Enßlin, “Zur Torqueskrönung und Schilderhebung bei der Kaiserwahl,” *Klio* 35 (1942), 268–98; J. Straub, *Vom Herrscherideal in der Spätantike* (Stuttgart, 1939/44), esp. 7ff; A. Alföldi, *Die monarchische Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreiche* (Darmstadt, 1970), 161–86. The centrality of the military in this respect was reduced over the 5th and 6th centuries, of course—see H.-G. Beck, “Res publica Romana. Vom Staatsdenken der Byzantiner,” *SBMünchen* (1970), Heft 2, repr. in *Das byzantinische Herrscherbild*, ed. H. Hunger (Darmstadt, 1975), 379–414, see 28ff; Ai. Christophilopoulou, “Ekloge, anagoreusis kai stepsis tou byzantinou autokratoros,” *Pragmateiai tes Akademias Athenon* 22.2 (1956), t. 7, see 15–37 (and see the review by J. Karayannopoulos, in *BZ* 50 [1957], 467–74). For a survey of research on late Roman/early Byzantine political theory and the relationship between ideological constructs and normative practice, see Chr. Gizewski, *Zur Normativität und Struktur der Verfassungsverhältnisse in der späteren römischen Kaiserzeit* (= *MünchenBeitr* 71) (Munich, 1988), 1–35.

<sup>106</sup> For a detailed analysis of late Roman political opposition which follows this line of reasoning, see Gizewski, *Zur Normativität*, esp. 185–210, see 206ff.

<sup>107</sup> See J. Gasco, “L'Institution des Bucellaires,” *BIFAO* 76 (1976), 143–56; *idem*, “Les grands domaines, la cité et l'état en Égypte byzantine (Recherches d'histoire agraire, fiscale et administrative),” *TM* 9 (1985), 1–89. On the *bucellarii* in the imperial armies, see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 101f and notes.

control of a fairly direct sort existed, and the soldiers, with rare exception, acted within the parameters of the imperial system.

This changes by the later seventh century. Suddenly we find soldiers and their leaders actively involved in challenging and overthrowing emperors on what can only be called an almost regular basis, at least for a while. What I have suggested was happening is complex, and I wish only to outline the basics of a very ramified argument here.

Two points can be made. First, an examination of the relevant evidence suggests that grievances over conditions of service, pay, supplies, officers' treatment of the men, and so on, were no longer at the root of such trouble. On the contrary, whether involving officers in a leading role or not, soldiers now took part in what we can reasonably call "imperial" politics, voicing their own particular points of view.<sup>108</sup> The key issues seem to have been fundamental questions about the nature of the state they lived in; the relationship between God, human society, and the individual; and the activities or abilities or Orthodoxy of particular rulers.<sup>109</sup>

This evolution took place in the context of a gradual change in ordinary perceptions of the relationship between the emperor and God and more especially about the source of imperial authority, on the one hand, and the location of sources of intercession, on the other, a change which occurred in the 550s or 560s on into the second half of the seventh century. In other words, there is a series of very complex, interlocking elements here, all of which need to be brought together to understand what made it possible for people, and specifically for soldiers, to think as they did, and act as they did, in the second half of the seventh century.<sup>110</sup>

Another fundamental change apparent by the second half of the seventh century, and which is an important element in the whole puzzle, is a loosening of what I have suggested was the fairly direct relationship between the state and its armies. The sources are difficult to interpret and very heterogeneous, but it seems clear that from this time and through the eighth century, with a specific exception, the regular field armies of the empire—now withdrawn into the regions which supported them after the Arab victories of the late 630s, and referred to as themes or *themata*—became increasingly ideologically and psychologically distanced from the center. While we cannot date many of the developments which occurred exactly, a number of points characterize the situation of soldiers and armies in the period from the 650s and 660s, although I would stress that the process is an evolving one.

First, central authority over recruitment or conscription of soldiers is loosened. This does not mean that the center retained no power, since a supervisory system of registers was maintained, and regular returns must have been made about the status of the ar-

<sup>108</sup> I have discussed the evidence for what follows at length in "Ideology and Social Change," esp. 178ff, and will therefore forgo a detailed analysis here. See also Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 355–75.

<sup>109</sup> See "Ideology and Social Change," 180–88.

<sup>110</sup> Apart from the discussion at Haldon, "Ideology and Social Change," 161–70, see also Averil Cameron, "Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium," *Past and Present* 84 (1979), 3–35; eadem, "The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople: A City finds its Symbol," *JTS* 29 (1978), 79–108, both reprinted in *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (London, 1981), parts XVIII and XVI, respectively; J. Nelson, "Symbols in Context: Rulers' Inauguration Rituals in Byzantium and the West in the Early Middle Ages," *Studies in Church History* 13 (1976), 97–119, repr. in *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), 259–81.



mies in each district to Constantinople (although we only have evidence for how this worked from the later eighth and early ninth century, when a series of reforms or rationalizations were carried out). But the result was, as we have already seen, that recruitment became highly localized.

Second, and in the process, soldiers become part of local society, again something apparent from the preceding discussion of the thematic structure.

Third, the organization of military matters at the tactical level—the *bandon* or basic unit (of anything from fifty to three or four hundred soldiers—again, the sources are both contradictory and imprecise)—was highly localized also. Since soldiers recruited from particular localities served in the same units—as far as we can tell (and again later evidence, which can, I believe, reliably be used retrospectively, shows how this worked)—they tended to share both similar loyalties and similar views or a similar understanding or “common sense” of how their world worked—or should work.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup>The evidence for this localization is indirect, but hardly to be doubted. First, we possess the cumulative references for recruitment on a local basis, and the role of the local community as a fiscal unit in this respect, material referred to already. Second, we know from 10th-century sources that the recruitment and maintenance of ordinary soldiers was organized through *tourmai*, or “divisions,” in turn subdivided into *banda*, referred to from the administrative point of view as *topoteresiai*, which were distinct geographic entities consisting of a group of localities made up in turn of a group of fiscal districts. The *drouggos* (loosely rendered as “brigade”) does not appear to have possessed any geographical identity, and referred to a tactical-organizational body only (note that it was a *chiliarchos*, the equivalent, but Greek, term for a *drouggarios*, who was in charge of the mustering party and *adnoumion* to which the poor soldier Mousoulis in the Life of Philaretos was ordered to report). These officers were probably attached to the permanent staff of the theme *strategos*. See note 36 above; and in general *De adm. imp.* 50.91–110; commentary, 189; Ahrweiler, “Recherches,” 80f; Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, 257–58. W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine State Finances in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (East European Monographs, 121. Byz. series 2) (New York, 1982), 73ff, 80f; “Remarks on the Work of Al-Jarmi on Byzantium,” *BSI* 44 (1983), 205–12; and *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford, 1988), 317f, has suggested that the *bandon* was an administrative introduction of the reign of Theophilus. While I believe he is right to argue for some important changes during this period, this particular suggestion is flawed. In the first place, there is actually no evidence for the territorial existence of *drouggoi* in any period, whether before or after the supposed reforms of Theophilus. On the other hand, *banda* had always existed, certainly from the later 6th century, as the evidence of the *Strategikon* of Maurice and several other texts of the later 6th and first half of the 7th century prove—cf., for example, V. Beševliev, *Spätgriechische und spätlateinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien* (= BBA, 30) (Berlin, 1964), 60, no. 89, for a 6th-century inscription from Odessos (Varna), on a tombstone of a certain Marcellus, a dekarch in the *bandon* of the *comes* Dudus based in the fortlet of Rouni. See W. E. Kaegi, Jr., “Notes on Hagiographic Sources for Some Institutional Changes and Continuities in the Early Seventh Century,” *Byzantina* 7 (1975), 58–70; Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 108ff, and esp. note 103. There is no doubt that they were commanded by officers with the title of *comes* (*komes*); and since they are found in all army units from the early 9th century on, there is no reason to doubt that they existed also during the later 7th and 8th centuries. The collection of Zacos and Veglery contains a number of seals of *komites* for the period from the mid-7th to the early 9th century, for example, and it is likely that many of them belonged to provincial officers of this type (*Byzantine Lead Seals*, nos. 666, 916, 3021, 3026, 3107, 1453A, 1533, 1678A, 1679, 1802, 1845, 2004, 2094, 2181, 2234, 2289A, 2419, 2468, 2469, 2480, 2480A, 2483). Unfortunately, however, this sigillographic evidence hardly helps. There are numerous seals of both *komites* and *drouggarioi* of the 7th to 9th centuries, but none bear any regional or geographical location, except for those associated with specific fiscal or command functions, all in turn associated with coastal regions or ports (e.g., the *komites* of Abydos or Hierou—see Zacos and Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, nos. 640, 1769, 1803, etc.). With the exception of such functionally specific commands, no seals of either *drouggarioi* or of *komites* associated with inland places are known, either for the former from the 7th and 8th centuries, or for the latter from the later 9th or 10th century. The *tagmata* of Constantine V were organized in *banda* under *komites* (although of course these officers had no territorial jurisdiction) but, more importantly, the *Vigla* or *arithmos* established as a *tagma* by Irene seems to have been originally an ordinary pro-

Fourth, the decline in the importance of provincial towns or urban centers meant that they no longer fulfilled the role of cultural centers and administrative and ideological intermediaries between province and center, a shift in their function which begins already in the fifth century and becomes very clear by the end of the sixth century (the so-called urban revival of the fifth century which took place in certain parts of the empire does not alter this, since the structural position of the urban landed elites and of the urban *curiales* was barely affected).<sup>112</sup> The result for provincial society was that only the army remained as a site, metaphorically speaking, on which large numbers of people regularly came together, where views and fears and anxieties could be expressed or formed in a public context. In consequence the army, in effect, replaces the urban populace of the empire as the voice of opposition or discontent—and it is worth pointing out that the decline in the independent political activities of Blue and Green factions in the cities of the East (as far as we know about their activities outside Constantinople at all), a purely urban phenomenon and hitherto the most obvious locus of popular views and discontent or approbation (whatever their structural or formal properties), more or less coincides with the decline in the functional importance of cities in East Roman culture and government, and the increasingly vocal appearance of soldiers in politics.<sup>113</sup>

All these factors lie behind the activities of soldiers in the later seventh and early eighth century, for what we see is, I would argue, the representation by soldiers from the provinces of what I will for the moment call “popular” attitudes and understanding of a rapidly changing world, which was often difficult to comprehend, or make sense of, in the terms of the traditional sets of values of East Roman cultural norms and expectations.

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vincial field unit, and it too was organized into *banda* with *komites* in charge (see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 236–45). Given the nature of the settlement of soldiers across the areas they defended, and granted that the smallest basic tactical unit was the *bandon*, under its *komes*, is it not inherently likely that it had in fact always been the *komites*, and not the *drouggarioi*, who commanded a geographically identifiable region, that across which the soldiers of their own particular *bandon* were recruited? I do not believe the evidence allows us to say with any certainty either way. But what is perhaps interesting in this respect is the appearance of *drouggarokomites* or *drouggarioi kai komites*, clearly in command of *banda*, in 10th-century sources referring both to their own time and the middle and later 9th century. This might suggest the real nature of the changes which took place in the earlier part of the 9th century, when we may guess that the importance of location and territory in respect of recruiting and mustering thematic soldiers eventually resulted in the position of *drouggarios* being reduced in value, that of *komes* being regarded as of equivalent rank. See Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, 256–58.

<sup>112</sup>See Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, esp. 99–124 on this question; also Brandes, *Die Städte Kleinasien*, for a detailed analysis of the textual and archaeological evidence; also H. Saradi-Mendelovici, “The Demise of the Ancient City in the Eastern Roman Empire,” *Échos du Monde Classique/Classical Views* 32, n.s. 7 (1988), 365–401.

<sup>113</sup>For the role of soldiers and the armies in this context, see Haldon, “Ideology and Social Change,” 172, 187ff. On the factions, see Averil Cameron, “Images of Authority,” esp. 6–15; Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Constantinople* (Oxford, 1976). For a succinct analysis of earlier views, see F. Winkelmann, “Zur politischen Rolle der Bevölkerung Konstantinopels in der nachjustinianischen Zeit bis zum Beginn des Bilderstreits,” in *Studien zum 7. Jahrhundert in Byzanz: Probleme der Herausbildung des Feudalismus*, ed. H. Köpstein and F. Winkelmann (= BBA 47) (Berlin, 1976), 101–19, who stresses the continued importance of the Blue and Green factions in Constantinople during the 7th century; also H.-G. Beck, “Konstantinopel: Zur Sozialgeschichte einer frühmittelalterlichen Hauptstadt,” *BZ* 58 (1965), 11–45, esp. 35–41. Even in Constantinople, as Alan Cameron shows, the continued “political” activity of these organizations is constrained by an increasingly circumscribing imperial ceremonial function.

What I have been describing, therefore, represents a fundamental change in the role of one aspect of East Roman or Byzantine society, and of the state apparatuses, in the period from the sixth to the eighth century. The army becomes political in a way that it really had not before, in spite of the fact that, as we know, there was in “constitutional” terms always a military element in, for example, the acclamation or choice of a new emperor, so that “politics” in the very broadest sense was not new for soldiers. But I do not think that alters the basic case I have tried to outline.

During the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, soldiers and the army continue to evolve, and it is important to emphasize that their evolution is only one aspect of the evolution of the state and its apparatuses, part of the social and cultural evolution of Byzantine society in the larger sense. This becomes particularly obvious when we refer, albeit very briefly, to two themes: first, the role of soldiers in the iconoclastic controversy; and second, the relationship between soldiers and the provincial armies in particular and the increasing power and importance of the new class of provincial and Constantinopolitan magnates who, growing out of the state-promoted meritocratic elite of the later seventh and early eighth century, become the aristocracy of the middle and later Byzantine periods.

There is no doubt that the politics of soldiers during the period of iconoclast rule are highly provincialized, that is to say, rebellions, civil wars, and similar disturbances, while often led by political men aiming at absolute (imperial) power, have very clearly localized roots, in respect of the sources of discontent, the nature of the opposition and competitive loyalties of one theme versus another, and so on. This is something which I think Kaegi’s work on the subject, and on military unrest in general, brings out quite clearly.<sup>114</sup> The creation of the *tagmata* by Constantine V, and the evolution of a “guards” army at Constantinople through the establishment by successive emperors of their own elite corps, marks a radical shift in the center of political attention in the army from the provinces to Constantinople. It also marks an increasing polarization between center and province, and the intentional involvement of military units by emperors in both ideological and power struggles—Constantine V, Leo IV, Constantine VI and Irene, Nicephorus I, Michael I, Leo V, Michael II, Theophilus all bring into the Constantinopolitan political arena their own military formations, whether they create them from scratch or promote loyal provincial units to metropolitan duties and rewards.<sup>115</sup> Thus with the second half of the eighth century there takes place what I would characterize as an explicit politicization of the army from above (in contrast to the largely unpremeditated response of soldiers in the preceding period to issues which they saw as of concern to them), on the one hand, accompanied by the creation of a two-tier army: *tagmata* as contrasted with *themata*.<sup>116</sup>

These changes cannot be divorced from what is happening in Byzantine society in

<sup>114</sup>See in particular W. E. Kaegi, “The Byzantine Armies and Iconoclasm,” *BSI* 22 (1966), 48–70; idem, *Byzantine Military Unrest*, 209–43, esp. 232ff, 270ff.

<sup>115</sup>See Haldon, *Praetorians*, esp. 245–56.

<sup>116</sup>This is clearest where the *tagmata* and similar units are concerned, but, as Kaegi has also demonstrated, it applies to the provincial armies too. See Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest*, 244ff, 254–69; and note P. Speck, *Kaiser Konstantin VI: Die Legitimation einer fremden und der Versuch einer eigenen Herrschaft* (Munich, 1978), 72ff, for example, who comments on the way in which Leo IV’s introduction of certain administrative changes is to be connected with the political context of securing his own position and that of his son and successor Constantine VI.

general, of course. They represent part of the relationship between the state and its rulers, on the one hand, and the new elite which the state created during the later seventh and early eighth century, referred to above.<sup>117</sup> They reflect also the economic recovery and the political stabilization of the empire (one of the results, in part at least, of the policies of the iconoclastic emperors and the forces which lay behind those policies). They represent further the consequent emergence of new sets of power relationships, both within the elite, between Constantinople and the provinces, and in particular for our concerns, between the provincial soldiery and their modes of recruitment, on the one hand, and on the other the elite of magnates and imperial office- and title-holders, in Asia Minor especially; and they are, at a slightly later date, tied in closely with the expansionist politics of the second half of the ninth century and after.<sup>118</sup>

With the tenth and eleventh centuries a number of developments regarding the political role or function of the army are of particular significance. On the one hand, we have the increasingly high profile of the so-called military clans in Anatolia, especially with respect to their local power which, as far as the sources seem to suggest, represents extensive networks of clientage and patronage, especially between the middling- and higher-status provincial elites, and between the soldiers and their leaders who were drawn from these elites. The evidence of the novels of Romanus I and Constantine VII suggests a growing "private" aspect to the thematic armies, dependent as they appear to have been socially and economically on the magnate landlords of their provinces. Even regions which traditionally appear to have been dominated by small-scale landed property and relatively dispersed estates such as the Thrakesion district in western Anatolia appear increasingly to have come under the sway of big landlords. References to soldiers being permitted to function in a private capacity suggest the nature of the changes.<sup>119</sup>

On the other hand, the increasingly significant contrast between the traditional thematic militia soldiery, and the ever more numerous units raised on a "tagmatic" basis,

<sup>117</sup>See note 75 above. For general reflections on the changes which occurred over this period, see the excellent study on the political and social position of the elite of the 10th through 12th centuries of Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 207–37, 249ff, 303ff, 324–36; M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025–1204: A Political History* (London, 1984), 2ff. Note also Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*, 145ff, and esp. A. Kazhdan, *Sotsial'nyj sostav gosподstvujushčego klassa v Vizantii XI–XII vv.* (Moscow, 1974).

<sup>118</sup>On the political and economic recovery of the state from the late 8th century onward, see most recently Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, with the critical responses of Lilie (*BSI*, 48 [1987], 49–55) and myself (in *International History Review*, 11.2 [May 1989], 313–19).

<sup>119</sup>In general see R. Morris, "The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality," *Past and Present* 73 (Nov., 1976), 3–27. For an example of the relationships of dependence which might develop between local officer-magnates and the soldiers of their theme, see Zepos, *Jus* I, 225–26 (and Lemerle's commentary, *Agrarian History*, 122f), where soldiers are granted exemptions from military service in return for gifts. Note also Leo, *Takt.*, 8, 26, concerning the secondment of theme soldiers to the personal service of higher officers; and Dagron's comment, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 282. For the Thrakesion district, see Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 159 with notes 97, 98, and literature; Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*, 145–76; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 122f; N. Svoronos, "Société et organisation intérieure dans l'empire byzantin au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Les principaux problèmes," in *Études sur l'organisation intérieure, la société et l'économie de l'empire byzantin* (London, 1973), part IX, 1–17, see 7 (originally published in *Proceedings of the 13th International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Main Papers* XII [Oxford, 1966], 371–89); Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 235–36 (suggesting that Hendy, *Studies*, 103–6 was wrong to assume that there were no large estates in this region in the 10th century; but see Hendy, *Studies*, 135f, for an actually less simplistic position). For the traditional view, see Ostrogorsky, *Geschichte*, 225ff.

recruited either permanently or for the duration of a specific campaign, and remunerated much more generously than the theme soldiers, marks the process of Byzantine reconquests in the East and in the North. While thematic forces, or rather their elite elements, continue to play a role, the lead in campaigns is now taken by brigades of centrally administered and controlled mercenary or professional troops—initially the various *tagmata* based in or around Constantinople, in turn extended by the establishment of greater numbers of tagmatic *banda* in the provinces, under their own commanders. In addition, the spearhead forces which led the reconquests in northern Syria and Jazira were mostly, as far as we can see, based around such mercenary forces, which included also large numbers of “ethnic” troops such as Turks and especially Armenians.<sup>120</sup>

At the same time, we must remark on a contradiction within the policies of successive emperors, especially those of Nicephorus II. There can be little doubt that the state, as represented in the legislation of Constantine VII, tried to maintain the thematic forces, recruited on the basis of the *strateia*, as an effective and fundamental element in the imperial armies. Commutation of the *strateia*, or rather its partial fiscalization, existed, but personal service was still usual. In contrast, all the evidence suggests that the legislation of Nicephorus II, as well as that of Basil II, while certainly designed to protect the *fiscal* base of the *strateia*, had in practice the effect of further generalizing the fiscalization of military service among stratiotic households. Whether it served at the same time to further deepen the gulf between those households registered as military (*stratitotikos*) and those defined as “civilian” (*politikos*), by increasing dramatically the amount of land which was thenceforth inalienably connected with military service, as suggested by Dagron, is unclear. But it must have dramatically increased the total land nominally subject to the *strateia* in one form or another. More significantly, the traditional system involved usually only a *partial* call up of those listed on the registers, as we have seen. A fully fiscalized *strateia* would make it possible for the state both to regularize and to maximize the extraction of resources drawn from this category of land, and thus enhance its revenue. The evidence from the tenth- and eleventh-century sources suggests that the state always kept its options open in this respect—it was the political and fiscal, as well as the military context of a given campaign which determined whether the fiscal option or that of personal service, or some combination of the two, was taken up.<sup>121</sup> Zonaras’ account of Nicephorus’ reform of the *strateia*, by which each group of holders was transferred from one set of obligations to a more onerous one, and by

<sup>120</sup> There had probably been a constant difference in character, at least from the 8th century, between the troops in the border *themata* and those of the interior—see J. F. Haldon and H. Kennedy, “The Arab-Byzantine Frontier in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries: Military Organisation and Society in the Borderlands,” *ZRVI* 19 (1980), 79–116, at 85; and esp. Dagron’s discussion of the 10th-century situation in *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 245f. But the differences which evolved during the later 9th and esp. the 10th century reflect in addition a fundamental shift in imperial strategy. See in particular Ahrweiler, “Recherches,” 27–36, 55ff, 82ff, 89–90; also N. Oikonomides, “L’évolution de l’organisation administrative de l’Empire byzantin au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle (1025–1118),” *TM* 6 (1976), 125–52, see 143ff. For the continued role played by the traditional thematic forces well into the 11th century, see the references in note 149 below.

<sup>121</sup> For example, the lack of regular thematic *adnoumia*, the continued existence of thematic forces well into the 11th century, and the possibility of transferring a fiscal *strateia* back into active service. See the references in notes 149, 146, and the anonymous 10th-century treatise on *Campaign Organisation and Tactics*, ed. Dennis, cap. 29 (320–322) for the *adnoumia*.

which the minimum amount of inalienable stratiotic land (for those who possessed it) was increased from a value of 4 to a value of 12 pounds of gold, makes it quite clear that what the emperor had in mind (certainly in the case of holders of naval *strateiai* transferred to infantry obligations, for example) was the raising of cash or materials, as much as manpower, with which hired troops—mercenary, professional soldiers—could be equipped. The result seems to have been—especially in respect of the report of Ibn Hawkal already referred to—on the one hand the entrenching of a fiscal distinction between military and nonmilitary households, the better to protect or even broaden the fiscal base upon which the *strateia* as a state obligation could be extracted; and on the other, a decline in state dependence on personal service from thematic holders of *strateiai*, accompanied by a considerable increase in general state demands for cash and resources—livestock, materials—imposed upon that part of the nonstratiotic population of the empire not otherwise exempt from such prestations.<sup>122</sup>

Here, however, the picture becomes rather more complicated, for there are a number of interlinking phenomena underlying and affecting these developments. To begin with we need to take into consideration the struggle between those factions which dominated the central power at given moments (factions represented by coalitions around various powerful figures at court in a constant struggle for influence, together with those families or fractions of families with vested interests in the capital and the provinces) and other factions, notably the leading provincial magnate clans not represented in a given dominant court power elite. Such oppositions can be detected in the rivalries between the Phokas and Skleros clans, for example, and also between them and the clique focused around the young Basil II during the later tenth century. But it is important to stress that these families had as yet no developed political unity of purpose—they were out for their own interests, even if they often coincided structurally, in respect of control over the state apparatus, with the interests of the whole social-economic class which they represented.<sup>123</sup>

It is apparent in the light of these considerations that we have to interpret the ways in which the reconquests took place, and more particularly the ways in which the state

<sup>122</sup>For Nicephorus' novel expanding the fiscal base of the *strateia*, see Zepos, *Jus I*, Coll. 3, Nov. 22, 255–256 (Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 721). There are a number of textual problems with this novel, however, and it may be that substantial revisions in our interpretation of its content will be needed. T. Koliai (Ioannina) is preparing a study, to appear in the near future. See Zonaras, III, 505.16–506.10 for his account of Nicephorus' reforms, and the commentary of Ahrweiler, "Recherches," 16ff; Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 60–62. For Ibn Hawkal, see note 94 above. For the general tendency to fiscalize state corvées and services which can be detected in the sources from the later 10th century (although commutation of the *strateia* is the earliest to evolve), see A. Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900–1200* (Cambridge, 1989), 109ff. For Dagron's comments, see *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 280–82. Basil II's novel of 996 (Zepos, *Jus I*, Coll. 3, Nov. 29 [262–272]; Dölger, *Regesten*, 783) again goes to great lengths to defend the fiscal base and independence of lands subject to a *strateia*, but pays no attention to the actual manpower formerly derived from such properties.

<sup>123</sup>See the excellent survey by Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, which brings out the internal splits and factional interests which dominated the elite, and stresses once again that the "military" and "civil" parties of the later 10th and 11th centuries were by no means monolithic groups (a view argued by Ostrogorsky, for example, and which in fact reflects the Byzantines' own perceptions of the situation), but rather a congeries of relatively fluid groupings concentrated on the careers or short-term interests of individual Constantinopolitan or provincial figures and their followings. On the role of such factions and personal retinues, see *ibid.*, 191–98, 287ff, and note also Kazhdan, *Social'nyj sostav*, 132ff.

administered the conquered districts or cities, very carefully. In particular, the establishment of large numbers of small units of military administration, while it certainly reflects the bite-by-bite nature of the Byzantine absorption of new territories, entailing as it did the setting up of new administrative and fiscal units to cope with each new territory gained, reflected also the reluctance of the central administration to hand over large territories to magnate domination and exploitation. Conquered districts were often absorbed directly as imperial *episkepseis*, autonomous fiscal units subject directly to the fisc. The imperial re-organization of the administration of the newly conquered Bulgarian lands between 998 and 1018, the exclusion from positions of authority there of Anatolian magnates from the Phokas-Maleinos faction, the increasing trend toward centralization of fiscal and military matters at Constantinople in the time of Basil II and after, and the growing divergence between the military and civil circumscriptions, all represent the same fear and the same policy. These developments also reflect, of course, the natural evolution of the different organs of state administration and control—fiscal, civil, and military—as the conditions generated by the reconquests and the conflict of interests already pointed to worked themselves out. By the same token, the centralization of control over public fiscal lands in the department of the *epi ton oikeiakon*, and the decline of the general *logothesion*, reflect the emperors' efforts, especially Basil II, to maximize state control over its resources and to minimize thereby the danger of alienation of such resources to other interests.<sup>124</sup>

We are thus confronted with several reciprocally influencing elements: conflict between different factions at the center over resource control and allocation; structural administrative changes which reflect both this struggle and the process of reconquest and its administrative demands; the consequent effects upon the traditional or inherited system of provincial civil and military administration; and, for our purposes especially, the differentiated roles of the different types of soldier in the political structure of the state and its various conflicting social-economic interest groups.

The results of these developments, which can be observed from the early tenth century on, can be summarized as follows.

First, the more visible evolution of a personalized relationship of loyalties and patronage between magnate leaders and their soldiers, especially those from the provinces where the former had landed property. Second, the centralization in respect of the state's control or authority over, and the considerable increase in the number of, the units which were established to defend the interests of the central power against those of the provinces, the *tagmata*. Third, the increased recruitment by the state of mercenary soldiers who were outside the relationships of provincial or thematic patronage, and therefore loyal to their paymasters. In this respect, Basil II's recruitment of the Varangians is qualitatively of a very different order, and responds to a quite different situation and context, from the recruitment by earlier emperors from the later eighth

<sup>124</sup> See in particular Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance*, 344ff, 354–63; idem, "L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantin," 135–41, 148ff; Ahrweiler, "Recherches," 46–67, 82–88; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 336, 387f; Svoronos, "Société et organisation intérieure," 10. The way in which the central authority retained control through directly absorbing new territories into fiscal units or by otherwise excluding the old Anatolian elite is also reflected in the figures for the origins and basis of wealth of members of the dominant elite in the 11th and 12th centuries established by Kazhdan, *Social'nyj sostav*, 195f, 204f, and accompanying tables.

century onward (right up to the reign of John Tzimiskes) of their own units, whether indigenous or foreign. The use of Norman and Petcheneg troops in the middle and later eleventh century, which reflects likewise the degrading of the traditional thematic forces, and at the same time the weakening of some elements of the provincial elite, must be seen in this context, that is to say, of the conflicting interests and antagonistic politics of those factions in the power elite which dominated the center, and those in the provinces. In fact, it is important to stress that, in spite of the increasing irrelevance of the thematic militias, and the increased "tagmatization" of the armies, provincially recruited *tagmata* tended to retain or reproduce similar local identities and solidarities to those which are known to have existed within and between the older *themata*. Local networks of patronage continued to operate, and local loyalties survived, in such units. The state's policy proved, in the end, to provide only a temporary respite from the provincialized politics and vested interests against which it was originally directed.<sup>125</sup>

To summarize, from the "professional" type armies of the later Roman Empire in the sixth century, which played only a very limited role in state politics, we can observe two stages of a progressive politicization of armies and soldiers: during the seventh and eighth centuries, as soldiers recruited locally identified with, and acted on behalf of, local loyalties, local ideological perspectives, and political or economic concerns; and during the later eighth and ninth centuries onward, as the opposition between the central tagmatic forces and the provincial thematic forces evolves. At the same time, the latter stage is accompanied by the efforts of the central establishment to prevent the process of alienation of provincial military resources, concurrent with the demands of the offensive warfare of the tenth century and the rise of a provincial elite. An increased dependency on both indigenous and foreign, professional or full-time, forces was a logical concomitant, a dependency which had the effect of centralizing military power and reinforcing, for a while, the authority and policies of the rulers.

The result was, in its turn, a two-fold polarization within the military establishment of the empire, which accurately reflected the internal tensions and dynamic of Byzantine state and society over the period in question: on the one hand, between the traditional provincial or thematic armies under their local officers and leaders, the latter drawn from different and often competing families of the magnate class, and the tagmatic or centrally controlled forces, some under provincial magnate authority, others still based at the capital, all again under officers drawn from this internally differentiated social and political elite. On the other hand there was a contradiction between the interest of the dominant elite as a social group, whatever its internal divisions may have been, and the interests of the "state," which is to say the faction dominating the center and imperial politics at any given moment. Over the period from the tenth century up to the seizure of power by Alexios I in 1081, different families and factions of the magnate elite, whether dependent upon indigenous, provincial *tagmata* or upon imperial positions, generally competed between themselves and with the center for dominance, with now one, now another family or group of families coming to the fore. But a direct result of the Seljuk victory in 1071, which affected the older military elite of the regions

<sup>125</sup> For the differentiation within the power elite and their reliance on different types of military force and retinue, see esp. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 321ff; Kazhdan, *Social'nyj sostav*, 132ff. For local loyalties, see again Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 305f.



in question most immediately, altered this balance in favor of those elements with access to state power and control over mercenary forces (as well as their own power bases). The victory of Alexius I and the political order he evolved is directly connected with these military and administrative considerations. In this respect, the army, both as an important and central institution of state and within society, represents an extremely valuable focus for research into the pattern and form of Byzantine social and political history.

### VIII. SOLDIERS AND STATUS

It can readily be seen from this survey that the status of soldiers must have varied both across time, in society as a whole, and in the attitudes of people from different areas or sections of society. Throughout the period from the sixth to the later ninth and early tenth centuries, the evidence suggests, indirect though it often is, and uncertain though the interpretation of certain legal texts might be, that soldiers had a relatively privileged position in comparison with the ordinary inhabitants of towns or countryside and, perhaps more importantly, they constituted a more or less clearly identifiable group institutionally. Of course, there were considerable differences in economic status and situation between and among soldiers. Nevertheless, the mostly indigenous Byzantine armies were relatively homogeneous, at least from the point of view of their juridical status, and this can be ascribed in large part, I suggest, to the fact that the armies were very much rooted in local society, recruited regionally from peasant communities and officered, as far as the evidence suggests, by local men.<sup>126</sup> Foreign mercenary soldiers were assimilated usually into Byzantine-led units, even where they constituted distinct groups within such units—the Chazars and Pharganoi in the *Hetaireia*, for example. And non-Byzantine soldiers recruited from foreign refugee settlers, such as the Persians under Theophilus or the bedouin Banu Habib under Constantine VII, were also assimilated by being settled and subjected to the same conditions of fiscal and civil administration—as far as we can tell—as native Byzantine populations.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> For some examples from the 9th and early 10th centuries, see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 331 and note 1021.

<sup>127</sup> On economic differentiation, see the discussion in section V above. For the *Hetaireia*, see P. Karlin-Hayter, "L'Hétériarque: L'évolution de son rôle du *De Ceremoniis* au *Traité des Offices*," *JÖB* 23 (1974), 101–43; Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance*, 327f; Ahrweiler, "Recherches," 32–33. On the recruitment and assimilation of non-Byzantine soldiers—whether in origin prisoners of war or refugees—see the passage at *De cer.*, 694ff, referring to the provisions under which "Saracen" prisoners of war were to be settled within the empire and given lands which might then support them, and upon which a *strateia* might be imposed, or on the basis of which soldiers might otherwise be recruited. See Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 133f, for a commentary (although it should be stressed that the passage says nothing about military service in return for being granted lands or fiscal exemptions for a limited period). For the Banu Habib, see A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes II: Les relations politiques de Byzance et des Arabes à l'époque de la dynastie macédonienne (Les empereurs Basile I, Léon le Sage et Constantin VII Porphyrogénète) (867–959)*, éd. fr. H. Grégoire, M. Canard (CBHByz 2) (Bruxelles, 1968), 2, 333, 419–20; on the "Persians" see Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, 292ff, 313–15; on both, Toynbee, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*, 82–85. Not all "mercenary" soldiers and their leaders were easily absorbed, of course. One of the best-known examples is that of the Armenian noble Tatzates, who attained the position of *strategos* of the Boukellarion theme, yet deserted to the Arabs (having abandoned the Muslim side in the first place) with his retinue in 782. See Theophanes, 456; Ghevond (*Histoire des guerres et des conquêtes des Arabes en Arménie*, trans. G. Chahnazarian [Paris, 1856]), 152ff. And the examples of the Slavs and their leaders who changed sides in 665 (Theophanes, 348) or the

This formal homogeneity was further reinforced by the fact that the property of soldiers acquired through their military service continued to be protected by a special military *peculium*. In addition, all property belonging to soldiers (as well as to certain other categories of state official) was protected by state law under the principle *in integrum restitutio*, by which the state undertook to make good on property lost or damaged during an owner's absence on public service. To a certain extent, it is this principle which underlies the policy of restitution enshrined in the tenth-century legislation dealing with soldiers' lands. The active troops received donatives and a share of booty (in theory, at least, and when the state could afford it) and they were regarded as occupying a special position by those who expressed views on the political ideology and the fundamental theological *raison d'être* of the empire. Along with the Church and the peasantry, the soldiers held a special position: "the army is to the state as the head is to the body; neglect it, and the state is in danger," was how Constantine VII expressed this role. In his *Tactika*, Leo VI described peasants and soldiers as the two pillars upon which the polity was founded.<sup>128</sup> The emperors saw themselves symbolically as the father of their soldiers, the soldiers' wives as their daughters-in-law; some emperors referred to the soldiers as their own *systratiotai*, or comrades-in-arms.<sup>129</sup> These represent both sets of practical attitudes as well as the somewhat more abstract ideas embodied in Christian political theory and inherited, ultimately, from the classical past. But there were also day-to-day practical advantages to being a soldier. These lay especially in the area of fiscal privileges, for soldiers and their immediate family (and hence any property directly owned or held and exploited by them) were always exempted from extraordinary

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Armenians settled in Cappadocia under Constantine V, who likewise abandoned the Byzantines (Theophanes, 430; see Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber*, 246, on Armenian desertions and the Byzantine reaction thereto) provide good examples of the potential dangers inherent in employing "outsiders." On the question of the assimilation of foreign soldiers to Byzantine social and legal norms, see below, note 147.

<sup>128</sup> On military *peculium*, *peculium castrense*, see notes 58, 59 above. For Constantine's comment, see Zepos, *Jus I*, 222, proem. (Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 673); and Leo, *Takt.* 11, 11. Cf. the distinction made in the opening paragraph of a novel of Romanus I (Zepos, *Jus I*, Coll. 3, Nov. 2 [201] a.934) between the subjects of the state and their taxes, on the one hand, and the military and civil duties required by the state on the other. Of course, the particular significance of this special right over certain types of property was diminished as the traditional *patria potestas* of Roman law was progressively weakened, a process which reached an important watershed in the *Ecloga* (see Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*, 378 and note 8, for literature and brief discussion), although important elements of this form of the paternal authority remained in force until much later (see K. E. Zachariä von Lingenthal, *Geschichte des griechisch-römischen Rechts* [Berlin, 1892; repr. Aalen, 1955], 106ff). Nevertheless, it remained, in theory at least, an important privilege, as is clear from the 11th-century *Peira* 72.1 (258). Again, of course, the special position of soldiers has its origins in the early Principate and before and, whatever the forms in which it was reflected, represents quite directly the absolute dependency on the army of the state for its existence and, more particularly, the ruler for his security. See *Dig* IV, 6.45; the soldier was considered, when on active service, to be "rei publicae causa absens"—absent in the service of the state. For the principle of *in integrum restitutio*, see *CI*, II, 50.1; 3; 4; 6; 8; 52.1–7 ("De restitutione militum et eorum qui rei publicae causa afuerunt") and the following sections; and M. Kaser, *Das römische Zivilprozessrecht* (Munich, 1966), 330f.

<sup>129</sup> For example, Haldon, ed., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, (C) 453–454, and commentary, 242–244. The motif was not new, even if its use represented a more rhetorical and ideological message than a genuine feeling of comradeship on the emperor's behalf: Trajan, as well as other military emperors, used a similar mode of addressing their soldiers. See *Dig* 29, 1.1, for the expression "my excellent and most loyal fellow soldiers."

fiscal burdens or *corvées*. Just as soldiers or similarly exempted categories of person in the late Roman period, they paid only the basic state demands, in this case the land tax or *synone* and the hearth tax, or *kapnikon*. Indeed, it must not be forgotten that the difference between “military households” and “civilian households” (*stratitikoï oikoi*, *politikoï oikoi*) was not especially medieval: its origins lie in the standard and entirely normal late Roman distinction drawn between those groups who enjoyed specific immunities in respect of certain state demands and those who did not. Those owing service in respect of the post (*exkoussatoi tou dromou*), of provisioning military personnel (*prosodiarioi*), and those who worked in imperial armories were similarly immune from certain state *corvées* in the tenth and eleventh centuries.<sup>130</sup>

The privileges of military *peculium* and the principle of restitution of property impugned while absent on service gave soldiers a particular juridical status also, as we have seen. In addition to this soldiers, and their immediate dependants, had in theory (like all groups so defined for jurisdictional purposes as *collegia* or *koïna*) the right to have cases tried by their own commanders for offenses relating to their duties. The privileges of prescription of forum, by which accused persons could refuse to appear before any court but their own even for criminal offenses, do not appear to have been retained. This seems to underlie the complaint of the author of the treatise on guerrilla strategy, for example, that soldiers’ rights were being violated by civil officials.<sup>131</sup> The increasing power of the centrally appointed civilian officials at the expense, apparently, of the military establishment in the themes in the second half of the tenth century is clearly reflected in this treatise, as Dagron has stressed. The text makes clear (if perhaps exaggerated) reference to the oppression of soldiers by the civil authorities (over fiscal and other matters). A number of other texts, to some of which I have already referred, dating from the ninth century on, give the same impression.<sup>132</sup>

Of course, this was the formal situation, both as represented in legal codifications

<sup>130</sup> On fiscal privileges, see the texts cited at Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 54 note 94; 60 note 104; Dagron, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 264ff, and the references in note 104 above. See Patlagean, “L’impôt payé par les soldats” for the late Roman origins of these special categories; and the note of Oikonomides et al. in *Actes d’Ivireon*, p. 153. For the armorers, see note 44 above. There is no reason to think that the partially exempt status of such persons in the 10th century did not derive directly from their similar situation in the late Roman period: see, for example, *CI* XII, 40.4; XI, 10.1–6; XII, 40.4 for the *fabricenses* (and cf. *Bas.* LVII, 5.4; 8); although it is interesting to note that the earlier legislation sometimes expressly cancels the exemption when the imperial *comitatus* is present. Such reservations may explain the abuses of exempted status which occurred, both in the later Roman period and after. The *Taktika* of Leo VI (20, 71 [PG 107, 1032c]) notes that soldiers drafted for state *aggareiai* when other nonexempt subjects were not available were to be paid for their labor, suggesting that they may not always have been appropriately recompensed.

<sup>131</sup> Ed. Dagron-Mihăescu, xix, 6f. For detailed discussion of soldiers’ privileges, and particularly the question of *praescriptio fori*, see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 304–7, with notes 915–26; Dagron, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 269–72.

<sup>132</sup> See note 70 above; and note also the letter 132 of Michael Psellos, asking for relief from the burden of a fiscalized *strateia* (or so the text would appear to suggest) for a registered man (*Michaelis Pselli Scripta minora*, ed. G. Kurtz and F. Drexler, 2 vols. (Milan, 1936–41), II, 154f. A case preserved in the early 11th-century *Peira* (66.27 [250]) records how a soldier was chased off his holding, which was on church land, at the instigation of a *kourator* of the Hagia Sophia, and eventually murdered. The official in question was brought to justice and compensation was awarded. But the case illustrates the sort of treatment the lowlier soldiers may have received at the hands of more powerful officials.

and imperial legislation, as well as in military treatises. In respect of soldiers' privileges, for example, it is highly likely—and there is a reasonable amount of indirect evidence for it—that certain categories of soldier in the provinces were as subject to victimization by imperial officials and by powerful landlords or other such persons as anyone else. On the other hand, just as in the late Roman period and before, for which the evidence is somewhat better, soldiers were probably able to bully civilians, either in their own communities when either on or off duty, or in the regions through which they passed when on campaign. There is not much evidence, admittedly, and what there is comes from exceptional or unusual circumstances (the violent behavior of soldiers in Constantinople during the reigns of Constantine V, Irene, Nicephorus I, and Michael I, for example, or that of Nicephorus II), but behind the biased and slanted reports of the historians, chroniclers, and hagiographers who recorded such events lies the reality of armed force, backed by legal privilege and state power, in a civilian context. Conflict over the question of billeting and provisioning, for example, must have continued to present the authorities with problems in the Byzantine period, just as they had in the preceding centuries, although there is virtually no evidence to speak of. Certainly, the presence of soldiers in either towns or countryside was usually felt to be oppressive by local populations, and tension and conflict between the two must have been endemic. And their privileged juridical status, quite apart from their exercise of armed force, must have given them *de facto* a considerable potential for getting their own way.<sup>133</sup> This may not always have been the case, but the circumstances where it did not apply were very specific, a point to which I will return below. In reality, therefore, the situation was much more complex than most of our texts directly admit, and there were many more subdivisions within the broad category of “soldiers” than historians have often seen. Consequently, it is to a degree rather artificial, and even misleading, to try to speak about the status of “soldiers” without further defining the object of our analysis.

As we have already seen, the term represents a whole range of different economic and functional strata. Social status obviously attaches to wealth, for example. Yet, while it seems that the better off among the thematic armies occupied a position of some import in their communities, membership of the *axiomatikoi*—those who possessed an imperial title—was just as significant in securing social recognition, and it is clear from the surviving documents that most *stratiotai* did not belong.<sup>134</sup> On the other hand, military function also played a role—the expensively armed heavy cavalry of the armies of Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimiskes, which may have been partially composed of

<sup>133</sup> For the later 8th and early 9th century in Constantinople, see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 232f for sources; and for Nicephorus II, Leo Diac. (*Leonis Diaconi Caloensis Historiae libri decem*, Bonn ed. [1828], 1–178), 63.18ff. While Leo represents the populace of Constantinople as the instigators of hostility between themselves and Nicephorus' Armenian soldiers, there is every chance that the latter were just as responsible, esp. in view of the favoritism the emperor showed toward the military. For conflicts over billeting and supplying soldiers in the late Roman period, see in general MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian*, 86ff; as well as Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 631f, with the comments of E. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4e-7e siècles* (Paris, 1977), 279–81; and R. Rémondon, “Soldats de Byzance d'après un papyrus trouvé à Edfou,” *Recherches de Papyrologie* 1 (1963), 62–65. For the Byzantine period, note the warning of Leo VI (*Takt.*, 9.1–3) to generals to forage in enemy territory, rather than rely upon the unwilling Byzantine rural populace, suggestive of a common source of conflict.

<sup>134</sup> It is significant that all those bearing imperial titles, whether civil or military, were expressly prohibited from purchasing land subject to a *strateia*: e.g., Zepos, *Jus* I, Coll. 3, Nov. 5. 209; Nov. 8. 223.

wealthy theme soldiers supporting themselves, must also have included a considerable number of poorer recruits equipped by the state through requisition and subscription, through *syndosia* and through direct state support. Such men may well have been able to improve their social position in their own communities, where they had such, through their military service. As Dagron has also emphasized, the border garrisons and watchtowers were manned by local forces on a rotational basis, men of relatively humble status, some serving on the basis of a *strateia*, others on the basis of a salary paid by the military authorities, others perhaps as draftees to the *apelatai*, seconded to frontier watch duty while their holdings received fiscal *adoreia*.<sup>135</sup> Such men as these will have been socially far inferior to the wealthy heavy cavalrymen of the themes, or indeed the mercenaries paid by the state, whether raised from the provinces or hired from outside the empire; but as enlisted men they will all, in theory, have shared the same juridical status and privileges. By the same token, it may well be the case that differences in wealth and status within the army developed from the seventh and eighth centuries, as those in cavalry or heavy cavalry units differed from those in infantry units. But no source throws light on this period.

In some texts, soldiers are regarded as belonging to the wealthy and/or the oppressors of the rural smallholders: Theophanes, for example, contrasts the *strateuomenoi* with the *ptochoi* (although it should be noted that the former term may refer simply to all those in imperial service, i.e., holding a *strateia*); while the tenth-century chronicle known as Theophanes continuatus, describing the effects of the legislation of Constantine VII, lists soldiers alongside *strategoï*, *protonotarioi*, and *ippotai* (presumably to be identified with the ordinary or perhaps better-off cavalry soldiers), in contrast to the *penetes* or poor.<sup>136</sup> As we have seen, there existed a wealthier category of registered *stratiotai*, who could afford to provide their own provisions (and help those who were less fortunate than themselves). In much of the imperial legislation, on the other hand, ordinary soldiers are generally bracketed with other less well-off peasants, whose livelihood was threatened by the *dynatoi* and by natural calamities. It is difficult to know if this represents a tenth-century development in particular. But according to an undated novel of Constantine VII, drafted by Theodore Dekapolites, the general economic situation of "soldiers" had worsened in the immediately preceding years, that is, sometime before 959, the latest date for the issue of the document.<sup>137</sup> According to the same

<sup>135</sup> On *adoreia*, see note 78 above. Leo, *Takt.*, 4.1 refers to both groups. For the frontier and the *apelatai*, see Dagron-Mihăescu, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 227, note 29, 245ff. Their activities are perhaps most revealingly reflected in the fact that the term came also to refer on occasion to bandits, and was associated very closely with the marginal society of the borderlands, a society in which there was a substantial number of immigrants and newcomers (certainly in the 10th century) seeking to exploit the socially more "open" possibilities inherent in the insecurities of frontier existence. See in particular Dagron's comments, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 254–57, with literature. See also Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 135 and note 1; Ahrweiler, "Recherches," 14.

<sup>136</sup> Theophanes, 404.9–10; Theoph. cont., 443 (in *Theophanes continuatus*, Bonn ed. [1825], 1–481). Note that Zonaras uses the term *ippotai* in a semitechnical sense to denote that category of *stratiotes* who held a *strateia* supporting, or partly supporting, a cavalry soldier, below the grade of heavy cavalry: Zonaras III, 506.7.

<sup>137</sup> Lemerle's novel E in his "dossier" (*Agrarian History*, 87): Zepos, *Jus I*, 222–26; on the dating, see Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 85ff. The novel makes clear reference to the existence of several strata of peasant *stratiotai*, differentiated according to their economic position: *ibid.*, 224, 225. A document of Ivron for 975

emperor's sixth novel (of 947), in contrast, soldiers hold a relatively high position in the hierarchy of the rural community; and it is clear that, even though this position seemed generally affected by the encroachments of the *dynatoi* (a term which itself embraces a wide group, ranging from the leading military and civil magnates down to simple tagmatic soldiers), many of those registered in the military rolls were relatively well-off compared with much of the rural population.<sup>138</sup>

The fact that the value of the property deemed necessary to support a thematic cavalry soldier was set at some 4 or 5 pounds of gold, that of a marine of the naval *themata* at 2 to 3 pounds of gold, appears to support this. For in respect of what is known about land prices for the period, this appears at first sight to represent more than simply a peasant holding, but a substantial small estate. In consequence the theme soldiers whose property attained this value might be thought of as being relatively well-off, an established rural elite. While the price of land varied regionally, 4 pounds of gold (i.e., 288 *nomismata*) would have purchased between 250 and 600 *modioi* (that is about 25 to 60 hectares, or 61 to 148 acres), according to its quality (productivity) and its use.

In the later tenth and eleventh centuries, however, a range of figures suggests that the holding of a peasant *paroikos*, or tenant, with one or two oxen could vary considerably—between about 80 and 200 *modioi*, according to the area and the estate—figures which suggest that many of those *stratiotai* who were in possession of land valued at 4 pounds of gold were not necessarily all that distinct from many ordinary peasant tenants. And it is worth recalling that the figure of 4 or 5 pounds of gold is a figure that “ought” to be sufficient, suggesting that in reality there was a great deal of variation.<sup>139</sup>

Of course, the legislation in which these figures appear, figures intended to protect the minimum amount of land registered and thenceforth inalienable (although it could be subdivided by inheritance), also assumes that some *stratiotai* may have possessed a

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refers to *stratiotai* who have fled to the estates of powerful persons and the Church (*eis ta archontika prosopa kai ta ton ekklesion*): see *Actes d'Ivrou*, I, no. 2.3–4. At the beginning of the 10th century, Leo VI is ambiguous about thematic *stratiotai*, implying that they needed a labor force to replace them when absent on duty, and hence that they were directly involved in agricultural production; and making it clear that the theme general was to select only those who could afford the costs of campaign suggesting that many were too poor, even though registered for service: see Leo, *Takt.*, 4.1; epilog. 57.

<sup>138</sup>For the novel, see Zepos, *Jus* I, Coll. 3, Nov. 6, 214–217 (Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 656), with Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 115–56. See also the remarks of Ahrweiler, “Recherches,” esp. 9–10 (although it should be pointed out that while the mention of soldiers in the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos points to their official status as “above” civil society, the list of precedence itself is founded upon antiquarian and formal rather than actual social premises: why else do soldiers of the *themata* rank higher than those of the *tagmata*? The latter were much better remunerated and, put crudely, more important [as we have seen, in the middle of the 10th century *scholarioi* counted among the “powerful”]. But the fact is, the *themata* were much older than the *tagmata*. Tradition and notions of taxis and harmony have clearly outweighed real social conditions in their relevance to the system of precedence. See *Kletorologion tou Philotheou*, 161.21–22, and Oikonomides’ comments, 160 note 125).

<sup>139</sup>Land supporting a *strateia* valued at 4 pounds of gold: Zepos, *Jus* I, Coll. 3, Nov. 8, 223 (and cf. De cer. 695.14–18, a fragment of a document probably from the first half of the 10th century, where 4 to 5 pounds and 3 pounds, respectively, are mentioned). Land prices and values: see E. Schilbach, *Byzantinische Metrologie* (= HAW 12.4 = Byzantinisches Handbuch 4) (Munich, 1970) 249ff, and idem, *Byzantinische Metrologische Quellen* (Düsseldorf, 1970), sect. 59–60. Size of peasant properties/holdings: Svoronos, “Remarques sur les structures économiques de l’empire byzantin au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *TM* 6 (1976), 49–67, see 52; Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire*, 49ff and documentation.

good deal more land than this. But it is particularly important in this connection to recall that the legislation specifies that the *strateia* (which is to say, the land which produces the income to support the *strateia*) should be of such-and-such a value, *not*, however, the holding of a single individual. Partible inheritance, which was the norm, will have brought about the fragmentation of many such properties (and hence the need for the partial *strateia*), with the result likewise that many holders of *strateia* will have held probably rather small holdings from which to earn their living, and have been relatively impoverished.<sup>140</sup> To speak in such a context of *stratiotai* as either “soldier-peasants” or as a rural “gentry” seems thus to oversimplify the issue.

There is a further consideration which must have had implications for the relative wealth and status of soldiers, whether holders of *strateiai* or serving men. This is the fact that, within each thematic army, there existed a differentiation between light and heavy cavalry and infantry as well as other arms—slingers, archers, and so on. In the period up to the middle of the seventh century, we may assume that, in its broad outline at least, the tactical organization of the later sixth century, as reflected in the account of Theophylact Simocatta, for example, or the so-called Strategikon of Maurice, continued to function. But what happened to the different specialist arms after the dispersal and localization of the armies had begun during the 640s and after? Did the *Boukellarioi*, for example, continue to function and be equipped as a crack division of heavy cavalry as described by the Strategikon? Similar considerations apply to the *foederati*, later forming a *tourma* in the Anatolikon *thema*, as well as the *optimatoi* (who were transformed into a support unit for the *tagmata* under Constantine V), or the *Theodosiakoi* and *Biktorei* in the Thrakesion *thema*. Did the different *banda* into which each of the later thematic *tourmai* were divided maintain their original tactical armament, with all the implications for the cost of weapons and armor, training, and skills, that this entails? Or was this lost and reduced to a common denominator over the centuries?<sup>141</sup>

Lack of space prevents a full discussion of these issues here, important though they are. But for all these reasons, I do not think that the *stratiotai* formed a distinct *social* group, as *stratiotai*, although many of them must have belonged to a stratum of petty landlords and some to the lower reaches of the “powerful.” By the same token, the extent to which a particular juridical status gave the poorer soldiers who held a *strateia* a slightly higher social position in anything other than legal fiction, therefore, is very difficult to determine. It may well be that their position was reinforced, for a time at least, by the imperial legislation protecting the properties on which service was based. And it must be remembered that this applied both to the actual soldiers, as well as to those whose properties supported the *strateia*. The position of the wealthiest theme sol-

<sup>140</sup> A text that appears to date from before the novel in question, however (albeit of the later 9th or early 10th century), implies that the *individual* must possess the appropriate value (although the phrasing can be seen as ambiguous), see *De cer.* 695.14–18; in contrast, for the *strateia* as the subject of the valuation, see Zepos, *Jus* I, 223. For patterns of inheritance, and their effects, see e.g., Ostrogorsky, “Die ländliche Steuergemeinde,” 35–37; Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire*, 39. The legislation makes clear reference to considerable differences of wealth between *stratiotai*: see, e.g., Zepos, *Jus* I, 225 (a well-off *stratiotes* who buys the stratiotic land of a poor *stratiotes* paid the same penalty as a powerful landowner).

<sup>141</sup> For all the units mentioned here, see Haldon, *Byzantine Praetorians*, 96ff, 173ff, 199–202, 222ff, 236–241, 246ff.

diers with *strateiai* may, as already mentioned, have been further enhanced by the legislation of Nicephorus II, insofar as it expanded the gulf between the wealthier and poorer *stratiotai*.<sup>142</sup> By the same token, it appears to have dramatically hastened the fiscalization of the *strateia* in general, with the result that the regular theme forces, of little military value in active offensive warfare, were more and more neglected, while the imperial armies were increasingly composed of professional, full-time soldiers, whether indigenous or not, whose local loyalties and embryonic associations with Byzantine society at the local level rapidly declined. The army of the later tenth and eleventh centuries became, in effect, socially deracinated.

The period about which we are least well informed remains that of the seventh and eighth centuries. We can only guess that the fiscal and juridical advantages of registering as a soldier brought social advantages too, just as they had done in the late Roman period, although once again there must have always existed differences in social standing consequent upon wealth and military role. But even in the crisis period of the tenth century such advantages must still have been important: Constantine VII's seventh novel makes it clear that individuals were still registering themselves and their properties, which they would hardly have done had it not been of advantage to them.<sup>143</sup>

The general position of thematic soldiers as a special category in the late Roman sense begins to deteriorate from the tenth century, however. This is a result of several developments. First, the increasing tendency, which by the time of the reign of Constantine Monomachos (1042–55) had become general, except in certain border *themata* or provinces, to fiscalize the burden of military service, the *strateia*, so that it was commuted into a regular cash tax.<sup>144</sup> Under Monomachos, the remaining border forces (of Mesopotamia and Iberia) were also stood down, their service likewise being commuted for a regular cash payment.<sup>145</sup> The category of military lands continued to exist throughout the eleventh century, although the *strateia* came to represent merely one fiscal obligation among several.<sup>146</sup> In addition, with the use of the device of *pronoia* to maintain soldiers (occasionally in the eleventh century, increasingly during the second half of the twelfth

<sup>142</sup> A point emphasized also by Dagron, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 186, 267–72. For the equivalence of the privileges (*pronomia*) of both active soldiers and those who were merely responsible for a *strateia*, see Zepos, *Jus I*, Coll. 3, Nov. 8 (224.20–26) and the discussion on *adorea* above.

<sup>143</sup> See Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 46.

<sup>144</sup> Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 59ff, and esp. Ahrweiler, "Recherches," 19ff.

<sup>145</sup> Zonaras, III, 647; Attaleiates (*Historia*, Bonn ed. [1853]), 44; Kekaumenos (*Cecaumeni Strategicon et incerti scriptoris de officiis regis libellus*, ed. B. Wassiliewsky, V. Jernstedt [St. Petersburg, 1896; Amsterdam, 1965]), 18 (more recent ed.: *Sov'eti i rasskazi Kekavmena: sočinenie vizantijskogo polkovodtsa XI veka*, ed., trans., and comm. G. G. Litavrin [Moscow, 1972]). See Oikonomides, "L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantin," 144.

<sup>146</sup> See esp. Ahrweiler, "Recherches," 21–23. The letter of Psellos referred to above (note 132) mentions the case of a man who cannot afford the financial burden of supporting the *strateia*, and who requests that he be permitted to serve instead. The letter indicates the possibility that personal service was still on occasion demanded. See note 121 above. The *logothetes tou stratiotikou* is last mentioned in documents for 1088 (*Acta et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi sacra et profana*, ed. F. Miklosich and J. Müller, 2 vols. [Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani] [Vienna, 1860–62], VI, 50–51, 55; with Oikonomides, "L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantin," 136 note 62). The occasional references to *stratiotika ktemata* thereafter seem to refer to lands belonging to soldiers as simple private property (for example, Miklosich-Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca*, IV, 319, where the landed property of soldiers, the Church, and monasteries are listed together).



century and after), and with the reliance of the state on salaried tagmatic units made up of a mixture of both Byzantines and foreigners, together with foreign mercenaries under their own leaders, the peasants who had previously supplied the core of the theme armies were no longer differentiated from the mass of the rural population.

This does not mean that soldiers did not continue to enjoy a particular legal status: there is no reason to think that non-Byzantines under their own leaders were treated any differently from indigenous soldiers. In respect of traditional juridical privileges and fiscal exemptions, it was the name and title of soldier which continued to be crucial, not the possession of a particular category of land. Whatever their origins, soldiers continued to be vital to the survival of the state. The emperor Alexios I praised those knights and footsoldiers who died during the course of the First Crusade as “blessed . . . since they met their end in good intent. Moreover, we ought not to regard them as dead, but living and transported to live everlasting and incorruptible”—echoing perhaps the sentiments expressed by the author of the treatise on skirmishing warfare more than a century earlier.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>147</sup>For the comment of Alexios I, see H. Hagenmeyer, *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100* (Innsbruck, 1901), Alexios I, letter 11 (152–153). See J. Shepard, “Aspects of Byzantine Attitudes and Policy Towards the West in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” *ByzF* 13 (1988), 67–118, esp. 109f, notes 164, 165; also Dagron, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 259–74, and esp. 284ff, and A. Kolia-Dermitzake, “He idea tou ‘Hierou polemou’ sto Byzantio kata ton 10o aiona. He martyria ton taktikon kai ton demegorion,” in *Konstantinos Z’ ho Porphyrogennetos kai he epoche tou* (Athens, 1989), 39–55, on the notion of a Christian “holy war” in the 10th century. The sources appear to treat all soldiers as more or less equal, although reference to their privileges and legal status is never direct. For the institution of *pronoia*, on which an enormous amount has been written, see in the last instance H. Ahrweiler, “La Pronoia à Byzance,” in *Structures féodales et féodalisme dans l’Occident méditerranéen (Xe–XIIIe siècles), Bilan et perspectives de recherches* (= Collection de l’École française de Rome 44) (Rome, 1980), 681–89; K. Chvostova, “Pronija: Social’no-ekonomičeskie i pravovye problemy,” *VizVrem* 49 (1988), 13–23; N. Oikonomides, “A propos des armées des premiers Paléologues et des compagnies de soldats,” *TM* 8 (1981), 353–71, esp. 353–55, 367–68. On the pay of “tagmatic” and mercenary soldiers, see *Logos Nouthetetikos* (in *Cecaumeni Strategicon*, ed. Wassiliewsky-Jernstedt, 93–104), 94.24ff. Native Byzantine units, and foreigners recruited into such units, continued to be registered on muster rolls and paid by imperial officials on an individual basis (see, for example, *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. J. Thurn [= CFHB 5] [Berlin-New York, 1973], 487.34–488.1, where imperial officials issue their gold rhoga to Cappadocian troops). The sons of mercenary soldiers, as inheritors of their fathers’ military equipment, were permitted in the later period certainly to replace their deceased fathers in active service (see *Pseudo-Kodinos, Traité des offices*, ed. J. Verpeaux [Paris, 1966], 251.14–18), evidence both for the continued strength of the notion of the hereditary nature of military service, and for the fact that the state must have kept up-to-date military registers of all such units (the principle is ancient, of course—such regulations for the sons of deceased soldiers existed in the later Roman period and into the 10th century, so that the practice probably had a continuous existence: see the references at Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 23f, 48 note 83). It is unclear whether foreign units under their own commanders, such as those of Roussel, Crispin, and others, were left under their own organization and paid in a lump sum, distributed by the leader. This seems to have been the practice in the later period—see, for example, Hendy, *Studies*, 27f, on the Catalans in 1303, but the sources are not very clear for the 11th and 12th centuries. The 6,000 mercenaries raised among the Alans by Nicephorus Palaeologus for Michael VII were probably paid in a lump sum (which they demanded before they would attack the rebel mercenary Roussel de Bailleul): this at least is one implication of the phrase “when the Alans demanded the agreed payment” (*Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum libri quattuor*, ed. P. Gautier [= CFHB 9] [Brussels, 1975], 183.9–10). In a slightly different case, the 700 slave soldiers of the refugee Mansur b. Lu’lu whom Basil II received in 1016 appear to have been registered individually on the military rolls and paid in the usual manner, as in the case of the Cappadocian soldiers referred to already (Yahya of Antioch, *History* [ed. L. Cheikho, in CSCO, ser. Arab., 3.7 (Beirut-Leipzig-Paris, 1909)], see III, 214; and J. H. Forsyth, “The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle (938–1034) of Yahyā b. Sa’id al-Anṭākī,” Ph.D. diss. [Univ. of Michigan, 1977], 545). References to other mercenary forces re-

Second, one of the reasons for the important position of soldiers in practical terms in the period from the seventh to the tenth century was the absence of any other focus save the armies for nonmetropolitan or provincial opinion, and the central position of the *strategoi*, the thematic commanders, in imperial politics. From the tenth century, the recovery of commerce and provincial urban fortunes, coupled with the civilianization of thematic administration into the first half of the eleventh century, with the rise to prominence of a provincial magnate class and with the disposable wealth and the influence of all who held imperial titles, altered these conditions, so that the structural position of soldiers in society as a whole changed.

This is a very important point, for it seems to me that, with the developments of the middle and later seventh century, soldiers had become an increasingly integral part of rural provincial society, much more so than they had ever been before.<sup>148</sup> The military lands, as they were eventually defined during the tenth century, were a by-product of this integration; and as the state's demands for soldiers in the offensive and expansionist campaigns of the tenth century and the political considerations of the eleventh century stimulated radical changes in both the mode of supporting the armies, on the one hand (fiscalization of the *strateia*), and the sources of soldiers, on the other, so the military lands and the provincial armies or militias which they had supported ultimately passed away, although it has to be said that there are a number of unresolved questions in this respect. During the course of the tenth century, there set in a process of separation of the regular troops of the empire from the mass of the ordinary, rural population, a process which was completed by the last quarter of the eleventh century and which I have already characterized as one of social deracination.

But this change in the structural position of the soldier, and in the organization and financing of the armies, did not necessarily affect their position in the ideological scheme of things. It did mean a greater distance between provincial society and the armies, as the latter came increasingly to be made up of men not recruited from, and

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cruited under their own leaders give no details. The otherwise unattested Pappas (Bryennios, 169.13–14), as well as Roussel de Bailleul (Zonaras, III, 709.12–13; Bryennios, 147.23f, and 146 note 8; Anna Comnena, *Alexiad*, I, 2ff [ed. B. Leib, *Anne Comnène, Alexiade*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1937–45)]), Robert Crispin (Bryennios, 134 note 2, 148, note 1, 147.23f; Attaleiates, 21ff), Hervé (Skylitzes, 467.5–6, 485.53–54) all arrived with their contingents, and may therefore have been paid lump sums. In the case of Harald Hardrada, however, the Norse source suggests that he and his followers were enrolled individually into the Varangian division, and were in consequence paid their salaries on the traditional basis. See *Logos Nouthetetikos*, 97.2ff; *The Saga of Harald Sigurdarson* (in *Heimskringla*, ed. B. Adalbjarnarson, Islenzk Fornrit, XXVI–XXVIII [Reykjavik, 1941–51]), III, 70ff, and see S. Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, ed. and revised B. S. Benediktz [Cambridge, 1978], 54ff. It is reasonable to suppose that the general principle of enrolling mercenaries individually was applied to members of other bands also. An important text in this respect is *Peira* 14.16 [47], where it is argued that a foreigner who accepts Byzantine positions and emoluments must also be judged according to Byzantine law, rather than being permitted [in this particular case] to make his will in accordance with his own laws, *ethnikos*).

<sup>148</sup> It is also possible that traditional forms of civil-military tension were lessened, as provincial theme soldiers increasingly stayed in or near the communities from which they were raised, having to live their lives for much of the year within the constraints of normative social and economic relationships. The same would hold for troops garrisoned on a permanent basis in the areas they had to defend, or police, during the late Roman period, of course, and the evidence assembled by Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 662–63, would tend to bear this out.

based for a much shorter time in, the areas they happened to be passing through or defending. And while this does not mean that *tagmata* recruited from the provinces were never based in their own districts, nor that traditional thematic forces could not still be raised (until the 1070s, at least), it does mean that the full-time and mercenary basis on which they served qualitatively affected their relationship to the population from which they were drawn.<sup>149</sup> The contrast between the two periods is brought out most clearly in the archival documents, from which it is clear that the notorious institution of *mitaton* served as one of the main means of supporting troops, both in transit and in their camps as well as not on active service—in the earlier period, the majority of provincial soldiers had been dispersed in their homes (the need for a general muster before campaigns, so frequently referred to in the sources up to the first half of the tenth century, is ample evidence for this), and billeted on civilians only during campaigns.<sup>150</sup> Nothing could illustrate more clearly the shift from a system of partly self-supporting soldier-militias, raised and maintained on a local basis, to that of an essentially mercenary army which had to be supported by cash and *corvées* imposed upon the ordinary population than the regular occurrence in the surviving archival documents of exemptions from *mitaton* and related *aggareiai* granted by the emperors to monastic and ecclesiastical landlords. Eleventh-century sources refer quite clearly to the cantonment of mercenary troops in the provinces, without doubt through the application of *mitaton*. Interestingly, the anonymous treatise on campaign procedures written in the reign of either John I Tzimiskes or Basil II implies that general *adnoumia* or musters had fallen out of use in recent years, evidence perhaps of the preeminent role of “tagmatic” units raised on a mercenary basis, for whom such musters or “call-ups” would not be relevant.<sup>151</sup>

Such soldiers were as important as ever to the defense and security of the state, Orthodoxy, and the dominant social groups, and in the official ideology they still held their significance. But the transformation of the structures of state administration, and

<sup>149</sup>For local theme forces of the traditional type, see Cedrenus II, 527.19–528.6; other examples at Cedrenus II, 543.17ff; Attaleiates, 93.7–11; 95.14–96.1; Cedrenus II, 660.14–20; 662.12–17 (indigenous *tagmata* and local *themata*); Attaleiates 155.6–7 (local and tagmatic troops again); Cedrenus II, 694.2 and 692.10—the contrast between indigenous troops and the *misthophorikon* (Franks, Uzes, and others) in 1071.

<sup>150</sup>See Ahrweiler, “Recherches,” 9; Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 63 and note 112; 75f; *Byzantine Praetorians*, 104 note 63, 324, and note 993. See also note 132 above.

<sup>151</sup>See Oikonomides, “L’évolution de l’organisation administrative de l’empire byzantin,” 144, who notes the massive increase in the number of ethnically distinct mercenary groups dependent on this *corvée* between 1044 and 1088. Note esp. A. Hohlweg, *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des oströmischen Reiches unter den Komnenen* (= MiscByzMonac, 1) (Munich, 1965), 46ff. For the dispersal of mercenary units in winter quarters and billeted on the local population, see, for example, Skylitzes, 485.53–54 (Frankish troops under Hervé dispersed in the Armeniakon district *eis paracheimasian*); Cedrenus, 508.19–20 (Varangians dispersed *eis paracheimasian* in the *thema Thrakesion*); *ibid.*, 608.18–19 (Franks and Varangians scattered in winter quarters in Iberia and Chaldia). Other examples: a letter of Nicephorus Uranus to the *krites* of the Thrakesion theme, at the end of the 10th century, requesting exemption from *mitaton*, which he said was economically damaging to his household (Darrouzès, *Epistoliers*, no. 42, 241–42); and, from an earlier period, one from Patriarch Nicholas I concerning the billeting of soldiers on the estate of the widow of the *drouggarios* of the Watch (*ibid.*, no. 31, 120–21). For the anonymous treatise, see Dagron, *Le traité sur la Guérilla*, 273 and note 45; for the text: *Campaign Organisation and Tactics*, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis, in *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*. Text, trans., and notes (CFHB 25 = DOT 9). (Washington, D.C., 1985), cap. 29 (320–322).

of the relationship between the state, the ruling elite of magnate clans, holders of imperial dignities, the wealthy and middling urban and landowning families, on the one hand, and the depressed rural population, on the other, lent to the armies and their members a very different character and position in the structure of late Byzantine society and politics. In spite of the dramatic changes that affected Roman administration and institutions during and after the seventh century, it would be reasonable to conclude that what we in fact have until the tenth century is a highly evolved version of the late Roman state, together with the institutional norms and structures which were inherited from that time. From the tenth to the twelfth century, these institutions are further radically transformed, with the result that the military comes to occupy a very different position in society, and to represent a very different set of institutions and social relationships from those which had gone before.

The history of its development after the twelfth century has been supplied by other scholars. In particular, attention has been drawn to the shifts in strategic priorities which followed from the empire's isolated and internally unstable position from the 1260s onward, shifts which themselves promoted a very different, and very much more heterogeneous military structure than was the case in the earlier period. But that is yet another story, already taken up by other historians, and I do not wish to pursue it here.<sup>152</sup>

#### IX. SOME CONCLUSIONS

Let me sum up the main points, as I see them, about the evolution of Byzantine military institutions in their social and political context, especially those concerned with the recruitment and maintenance of soldiers, from the seventh to the eleventh centuries.

To begin with, there is no doubt that there always existed a number of parallel modes of recruiting and maintaining soldiers. What varied across time was the emphasis placed upon different modes, according to the needs of the state and the economic and fiscal exigencies which constrained imperial policy. In the second place, it is clear that both the *themata* as administrative regions and the connection between military service and the private or family income of soldiers (land) have their roots in the crisis period of the second half of the seventh century. But I would stress that there is no evidence for any deliberately planned, institutional connection between them. The withdrawal of armies into Asia Minor, and the consequent development of territorial *themata*, certainly entailed a localization of recruitment which led to the evolution of a connection between the possession of land, and the obligation to support military service, for certain soldiers and their heirs. But it is important to see that this was a historically evolved relationship, not one that was planned by some guiding authority. We should stop thinking of the "theme system" and the "military lands" in this way once and for all.<sup>153</sup> When cash

<sup>152</sup>See, for example, Oikonomides, "A propos des armées des premiers Paléologues et des compagnies de soldats," *TM* 8 (1981), 353–71; and especially M. C. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Soldier: A Social and Administrative Study*, 2 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J., 1984; Ann Arbor, 1990).

<sup>153</sup>These points were made by both Karayannopoulos, *Die Entstehung der byzantinischen Themenordnung* (Munich, 1959), esp. 87ff, as well as by Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 150; see also Haldon, *Recruitment and Conscription*, 79; although it seems that they still need to be repeated.

resources and manpower were in short supply, these two complementary developments were the best the rump of the late Roman state could offer in managing its military and its fiscal needs. Side by side with the provincial soldiers supported wholly or partially by their own resources, and registered in the state muster lists, there existed both mercenary soldiers recruited from outside the empire or from among warlike groups within the empire, as well as mercenary (i.e., full-time) regular soldiers in each theme (note that I employ the term “mercenary” in a value-free sense, to refer simply to “professional,” paid soldiers who enlist individually or in groups for specific campaigns or a specific number of years). Most of these points are not disputed. But as most of this article has shown, there still remains considerable disagreement over the actual functioning of the *strateia* and its relationship to both land and people, as well as over the origins of the institution in the first place.

In addition, I would henceforth hesitate to speak of a theme “system” or a “system” of military lands. What the sources in fact permit us to describe is a fairly open-ended network of context-bound, institutional practices, which represent a rather more fluid set of relationships than the word “system” allows.

This network of modes of recruiting and maintaining soldiers worked comparatively well in the situation which engendered it, but once conditions changed, the nature of the demands made upon it changed also. And it must be stressed that conditions changed fairly rapidly from the middle of the eighth century. A first stage in this process of transformation is marked by the tactical organizational reforms undertaken by Constantine V, then by the policies of Emperor Nicephorus I, as recorded, however biased and slanted the report, by Theophanes. Other hints as to how these structures evolved appear in sources of the middle and later ninth century, particularly associated with the reign of Basil I, but also with that of Theophilus; and there is a real watershed with the legislation of the Macedonian emperors. For the imperial promulgations of the tenth century represent not just the rulers’ concern with the welfare of the peasantry and the soldiers drawn from them, nor with the increasing threat posed by the *dynatoi* to the resources at the state’s disposal, nor again the structure of a complex and relatively efficient state apparatus. On the contrary, I would argue that this legislation represents the last, failed efforts of the central administration to shore up a mode of recruiting and maintaining soldiers which was already obsolete—by reason of circumstances vastly different from those in which it was first made possible, and because of the demands of the expansive warfare and campaigning necessitated by imperial policy with regard to both the Caliphate and the empire’s western neighbors in the tenth century. The reign of Nicephorus II Phocas, as has generally been recognized, marks the key moment: the massive increase and redistribution of the burden of maintaining soldiers attributed to this emperor can only reflect an increase in the use of mercenary, that is to say, professional, full-time forces on a large scale.<sup>154</sup>

The early stages of this process of decreasing relevance and increasing inefficiency (defined functionally in relation to the aims and methods of state policy) of the locally recruited and part-time thematic forces can be seen already in the eighth century. The increasing reliance on full-time, “tagmatic” units from the 780s and 790s, the increasing

<sup>154</sup> See above, and notes 98 and 125.

deployment of mercenary forces through the ninth and into the tenth century, reflect not simply the expansion of warfare in the tenth century. Rather, it reflects the increasing relative inefficiency of the system of relying on armies largely consisting of part-time peasant conscripts which had developed under one set of circumstances, in a very different political and economic context in which the state was not only taking the offensive militarily on a long-term basis, but could once more afford to pay substantial cash sums for professional warriors.

The state always continued to maintain professional troops, as we have seen. The seventh and early eighth centuries should perhaps be regarded, therefore, not as the period in which a “new” system was planned, evolved, and established, but rather as a period in which the state’s financial situation made the provincialization of recruitment and maintenance of the armies unavoidable, not because the state wanted its armies to become a sort of part-time “militia,” but because that is the effect which the exigencies of the situation produced in the old structures. On the contrary, it is clear that the state continued to treat its thematic armies as regular forces, even when they were no longer able to respond as such; so that the increasing reliance on ever-larger numbers of paid, professional soldiers, as soon as economic conditions permitted, is quite predictable, a development which is paralleled exactly by the increasing provincialization and devaluation of the thematic conscript armies. Beginning with the reforms of Nicephorus I, which to my mind reflect the continuing efforts of the state to minimize direct state financing of the armies as far as possible, the period up to the reign of Nicephorus II marks the progressive, if piecemeal, response of successive generations of state officials and rulers to a pattern of recruitment and maintenance of field armies generated in and tailored to the situation of the second half of the seventh century. While it may once have represented the only adequate functional response to a particular situation, it was already in the middle of the eighth century showing signs of strain; by the middle of the tenth century it is clear that it could no longer adequately meet the demands placed upon it. In this particular context, it is also important to emphasize that, in the later ninth and tenth centuries at least, those who held a *strateia* in respect of furnishing a soldier or the resources to maintain a soldier did not compose a homogeneous social group. On the contrary, there were very considerable variations in the individual fortunes of such *stratiotai*, so that to consider them as either a peasant militia or a class of well-to-do rural estate-holders would be, in my view, incorrect.

The effects of the long-term structural incapacity referred to above were expressed in what we can identify as a clear move away from reliance on armies made up of locally recruited conscripts supported by local resources, and the transformation of those resources into fiscalized revenues. As a result, resources for the maintenance of armies were once more routed through and concentrated at the center of imperial power. The “theme” armies disappear, to be replaced by units of full-time soldiers recruited from all the provinces of the empire as well as from outside, paid and maintained through central government agents and the imposition on the provincial populations of a wide range of extraordinary demands and corvées. These changes had, of course, a direct effect on the political power struggles within the dominant social elite of the empire.

I have presented a highly selective discussion of recent debates on Byzantine military administration. I hope I have been able to demonstrate the central importance of the

study of its army and related institutions for the history of the later Roman and Byzantine state and the society which it embraced.

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*Postscript*

Recent works not included in the notes to this article are relevant to the debates under discussion and deserve mention here. Particularly important is Michel Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VI<sup>e</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 10) (Paris, 1992), esp. 231–53, on the social and economic position of soldiers in the village community.

On land prices (see note 139 and the accompanying text), see J.-C. Cheynet, E. Malamut, and C. Morrisson, “Prix et salaires à Byzance (Xe–XVe siècle),” in *Hommes et richesses dans l’empire byzantin*, II: *VIII<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. V. Kravari, J. Lefort, and C. Morrisson (Paris, 1991), 339–74.

Finally, on the term *thema*, see the discussion by J. Koder, “Zur Bedeutungsentwicklung des byzantinischen Terminus *Thema*,” *JÖB* 40 (1990), 155–65. Koder’s analysis suggests that the term may have been used before the middle of the seventh century to refer to any “designated area,” coming as a result of the withdrawal of the armies into Anatolia to refer also to the latter, now established in specific areas. If his results are accepted, this would be further corroboration for the suggestion made above (see pp. 7–8) that the armies were distributed according to the ability of specific regions to support them.